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Publications

# Report of The Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry

Volume  
**4**

## Violence in Print and Music

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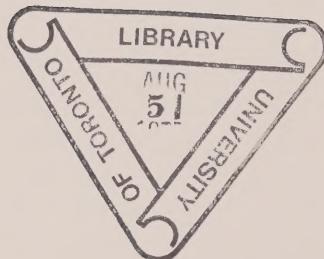
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The Royal Commission on Violence in the  
Communications Industry was established by Order in  
Council in May 1975 and published an Interim Report  
in January 1976. It held hearings throughout the  
Province of Ontario from October 1975 to May 1976.

A selection of public briefs, reports of foreign  
consultations and the conclusions and  
recommendations of The Royal Commission on  
Violence in the Communications Industry are  
published in Volume I, which is available in French  
and in English.

The Commission's Bibliography comprises Volume II.

Twenty-eight independent studies of the media were  
undertaken for The Commission and are contained in  
Volumes III to VII.



## Order-in-Council

*Order-in-Council approved by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, dated the 7th day of May, A.D. 1975.*

Upon the recommendation of the Honourable the Premier, the Committee in Council advise that pursuant to the provisions of The Public Inquiries Act, 1971, S.O. 1971, Chapter 49, a Commission be issued appointing

The Honourable Julia Verlyn LaMarsh, P.C., Q.C., LL.D.,  
Judge Lucien Arthur Beaulieu, and  
Scott Alexander Young,

and naming the said Julia Verlyn LaMarsh as Chairman thereof, to study the possible harm to the public interest of the increasing exploitation of violence in the communications industry; and that the Commission be empowered and instructed:

1. to study the effects on society of the increasing exhibition of violence in the communications industry;
2. to determine if there is any connection or a cause and effect relationship between this phenomenon and the incidence of violent crime in society;
3. to hold public hearings to enable groups and organizations, individual citizens and representatives of the industry to make known their views on the subject;
4. to make appropriate recommendations, if warranted, on any measures that should be taken by the Government of Ontario, by other levels of Government, by the general public and by the industry.

The Committee further advise that pursuant to the said Public Inquiries Act, the said Commissioners shall have the power of summoning any person and requiring such person to give evidence on oath and to produce such documents and things as the Commissioners deem requisite for the full investigation of the matters to be examined.

And the Committee further advise that all Government ministries, boards, agencies and committees shall assist, to the fullest extent, the said Commissioners who, in order to carry out their duties and functions, shall have the power and authority to engage such staff, secretarial and otherwise, and technical advisers as they deem proper, at rates of remuneration and reimbursement to be approved by the Management Board of Cabinet.



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# **The Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry**

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\* 1975

\*\*1976

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- Summary of Surveys
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- Television Crime Drama: A Mythological Interpretation—J. Taylor
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- A Content Analysis of Feature Films—J. Linton and G. Jowett
- Content Analysis of the News Media: Newspapers and Television—D. Gordon and B. Singer
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- The Control of Mass Entertainment Media in Canada, the United States and Great Britain: Historical Surveys—G. Jowett, P. Reath and M. Schouten
- Speaking the Unspeakable: Violence in the Literature of Our Time—R. Fulford
- Violence in Literature for Children and Young Adults—Claire England
- Magazines and Violence—E. Beattie
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\*Ce volume est publié également en français.

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# **The Control of Mass Entertainment Media in Canada, the United States and Great Britain: Historical Surveys**

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# Preface

This study was undertaken in order to provide some historical background to the work of the Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry. The study is intended to be a quick historical overview of the problems encountered in the past when societies have attempted, for a variety of reasons, to control the nature and content of mass entertainment. It should be noted at the outset that our examination of this historical problem was not limited merely to the subject of "violence." In fact, "violence" as a specifically articulated problem was very rare before the twentieth century. While one can find the occasional reference to the problem of violence, usually this was associated with a plethora of other dangers supposedly inherent in the mass entertainment media. Only in the twentieth century, with the introduction of more far-reaching "mass media," do we find society's attention focused on the problem of "violence" as a staple ingredient of mass media content. Thus this study is of necessity wide-ranging, both in its historical dimension, and in the examination of the various responses to mass entertainment media.

Also this study is not intended to be solely an examination of "censorship," although the legal prohibition and control of the media falls within its scope. Throughout history societies have found ways and means of "controlling" the nature and influence of entertainment without necessarily having to resort to legal forms of censorship. Thus at various times the introduction of countervailing influences or entertainments, or the imposition of specific taxes, or even the creation of boards of "self-regulation" by the entrepreneurs of mass entertainment, have all been successful as aspects of social control.

The key questions we have addressed are those associated with the supposed power of the various media to "influence" those individuals who are exposed to them. Thus we have tried to deal with the initial responses and reactions to the introduction of new media (entertainment) forms, and the ways in which society, or sometimes that group who proclaim themselves "the guardians of the culture," have attempted to control this influence. The study describes the rhetoric of many of these claims, but again this was not intended to be an in-depth evaluation of the scientific validity of what people have claimed for the media in the name of social control.

It should also be noted that we have tried in this study to be as objective as possible in our evaluation of the history of social control of the media. Unfortunately, this is an issue that is highly volatile, and occasionally our biases may show through. Nevertheless, this study is not intended in any way to make a primary case for or against certain types of media control. As a historical study it is intended to act as a

guide to what has been tried, with varying degrees of success or failure, in the past.

The four media we have selected for examination – literature, radio, motion pictures, and comic books – have all been subjected to similar treatment as various societies have sought ways and means to control their influence, and to find a proper social and cultural niche wherein they might be accommodated. We have deliberately not examined television in this study for several reasons. First, the structure of the television industry grew out of that already established by radio, and television very quickly adopted certain codes of self-regulation which it borrowed from the other media, in particular radio. Thus, there was not the same initial struggle to establish legal mechanisms to control content. Second, the questions that have now emerged regarding television's role and influence in modern society would have been simply too large for anything but the most cursory coverage in this report. Third, although television has been widely available for nearly thirty years, we are no nearer arriving at a consensus about the proper methods of its control than we were when it was first introduced. In essence, we are dealing with a "massive" medium, which is still viewed in the privacy of the individual home, and therefore subject to individual values and norms, but nonetheless, the product of highly complex centralized organizations. This paradoxical problem of a "national" medium which is consumed "locally" has been a perpetual difficulty throughout the history of mass entertainment. Television has now carried the problem far beyond any hope of a totally satisfactory resolution.

Where possible we have used Canadian examples, but, as in so many other aspects of communication studies in Canada, there is not a large, useful legacy of material dealing with these issues in specific Canadian terms. Nevertheless, it can be safely assumed that much of the rhetoric cited in this study was universal, and was uttered as much in Canada as in other countries.

While all three authors participated in the final form of the study, Professor Garth Jowett was the principal researcher, and was responsible for the section on motion pictures; Penny Reath was responsible for the chapters on literature and comic books; and Monica Schouten was responsible for the section on radio. We would like to thank Mr. C. K. Marchant, the Director of Research of the Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry, for his patience and understanding, and Mr. Don Sims and Mr. George Belcher of the Ontario Theatres Branch for their cooperation.

## Chapter One

# The Control of Popular Literature

### Popular Literature: The Contradiction of Censorship

It was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that legal attempts were made to control violence in the content of popular literature. Victorian middle-class critics had expressed concern several decades earlier that violent content of the "Penny Dreadful" press was a primary cause of juvenile delinquency and corruption. Violence has always been a staple of popular literature since the earliest days of printing, and was deeply infused in the legends and folk tales of the oral tradition which had preceded. It is a historical fact that audiences for popular culture seem to possess an insatiable demand for real or fictitious news of disasters, murders, criminal activities, battlefield accounts, scandalous gossip, and monstrous births. The ready market for such violent material was bound to be exploited for financial gain, particularly when other forms of content, such as politics, were legally censored. By examining the relationship between censorship, politics, and popular culture we can see the emergence of distinctive patterns of social control.

Sixteenth century "corantos"<sup>1</sup> were forced to rely on sensational and often violent news, and stories with no political ramifications, since authorities censored controversial political news from abroad and most domestic news. Thus, Jemmy Catnach's trade in broadside ballads and chapbooks dealing with murderers' activities and the last dying words of notorious criminals flourished at a time (1813-1838) when sedition and blasphemy were extremely dangerous. Again, penny newspapers, dubbed the "Penny Dreadfuls", which dominated the nineteenth century after 1830, thrived by concentrating on violent and sensational criminal tales while "obscene," "pornographic," or "indecent" literature was vigorously censored. Although concern is currently increasing over the possible deleterious effects violent content of popular culture forms may have on its audience, historically the primary target of literary censorship has been that which is considered "obscene." Seldom has "violence" as a specific issue been of concern. This is clearly a predominant issue of the twentieth century.

This pattern has been recognized by several critics of

censorship practices who have, in turn, offered similar interpretations. Writing in 1949, the American scholar Gershon Legman concluded:

Both love and violence are part of one category termed "thrills" . . . where sex is censored, the substitute is sadism, the literary lynch and increased violence. . . . The popularity of violence is due to the fact that it is the only outlet for fears and inadequacies that is socially acceptable and still open to us. Our literature, as a result, is empty of sex but reeking with sadism. . . . Violence and death have saved us from sex.<sup>2</sup>

Legman's analysis deals with the current status of censorship legislation. Morris Ernst and William Seagle also recognized a pattern of censorship that has emerged from the beginning of time:

The yearning for a fuller life has always been thwarted by the censor. We may speculate that eating and hunger in the early days of the race were the front trenches of suppression. As man attained the right to all foods, the taboo shifted to religion. To prevent fresh views on spiritual matters libraries were destroyed and thousands of Brunos burned at the stake. Furthermore the regimentation of people could not continue if free thought on matters of state was permitted. To whisper about the King became sedition. The censor's ax swung with violence. Food, religion, the state –, then sex. What next?<sup>3</sup>

Writing in 1929, Ernst and Seagle may not have been able to decipher a trend that is becoming evident in 1976. Now, of course, we can answer their question – "violence"!

Not only does an evolutionary pattern emerge in the type of content that is censored at a particular moment in history, but the means by which censorship becomes legally instituted evolved in a similar fashion at different times.

Censorship is not democratic. This historical fact became apparent as literacy increased and mass circulation of popular literature became possible. It has always been the case that at least a small group of people were privileged to read literature which may have been forbidden to the rest of its contemporaries. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, if one's education included Latin, the most obscene passages of English translations of Latin classics were decipherable. In England, Privy Councillors and those given

permission by the bishops were allowed to import and peruse seditious literature that, in the possession of the common man, was a capital offence. Even in 1967, the *Daily Telegraph* reported that the British Home Office set up a library of books, all of which had been successfully prosecuted for obscenity, for exclusive study by Members of Parliament.<sup>4</sup>

Low prices and general availability are also an integral part of censorship. Cheap reprints are held to be more dangerous than deluxe editions. When cheap prices were combined with general literacy, making mass circulation of questionable literature possible, self-appointed "Guardians of Public Morals" began to express a paternalistic concern for children, the poor, or minorities who lacked the sophistication of the rich and mature, and were therefore more susceptible to corruption.<sup>5</sup>

Very seldom was censorship ever requested by the audiences for popular culture. Rather, as a particular form of popular culture became widespread, concerned critics formed volunteer organizations to counteract its "evil" influences by one or more methods, by initiating prosecution procedures, pressing for censorship legislation, focusing public opinion, or producing an alternative form of attraction.

Organizations of this nature have roots as far back as 1692 in the Society for the Reformation of Manners in England, and successively emerge with greater frequency and impact on both sides of the Atlantic. When such groups successfully mobilized popular opinion, legal forms of censorship were likely to follow. This trend is apparent in the evolution of obscenity censorship in both Britain and North America.

As we trace the evolution of attempts to control the content of popular culture, the contradiction which Gershon Legman notes becomes apparent:

The result is a schizophrenic law: . . . sex, which is legal in fact, is a crime on paper; while murder – a crime in fact – is, on paper, the best seller of all time.<sup>6</sup>

#### Transition From an Oral Tradition: The Growth of Popular Literature

Before the introduction of the printing press to England in 1476, the book trade was principally concerned with satisfying the needs of scholars. Production and distribution of books was centred in the monasteries and extended after 1190 to include the universities. Even at this early date all books were subject to censorship by the Chancellor in order to filter out the possibility of heretical statements.

Writers of a more popular and secular literature were usually commissioned by wealthy patrons to write such books. Most of these authors had only local reputations, wrote for a limited audience, and were restricted in their endeavours by the individual specifications laid down by the patron who in return provided financial support. The majority of the population, financially unable to commission books, relied on an oral tradition of folk

tales and ballads that were passed on between generations by word of mouth. Wandering minstrels, poets, and troubadours were the popular sources of news, political and social rumours, songs, stories, and romances.

Tales from all over the world, primarily myths of supernatural beings and the exploits of exceptionally heroic men, accurately preserved by means of mnemonic rhythm and symbolic movement, were infused into a rich oral folk culture. The essence of these familiar plots have been described as follows:

... conflicting adults, fatal children, strain between parents and offspring, tensions between fathers and sons or mothers and daughters, the wicked step-mother and neglected daughter, the cruel father and younger son. Love, hate, and guilt bring in their train murder and panic, with the dead returning to plague or devour the living. And always there are the friendly talking animals and birds, who warn men against love, against gold and silver, against certain [poisonous] plants.<sup>7</sup>

Ballads were extremely popular and sung all over Europe and Asia.

They tell of the girl who followed her 'fause lufe', of 'fause Sir John', of the talking 'wee birdie', of the dangers of the 'red goud' and the 'seller'; they tell of the ghastly crimes to the 'childe' who is drowned or smothered or stabbed and who always seems to be blessed or threatened with 'gouden locks'. Beware the red goud danger. The ballads had refrains not unlike those to be heard in the traditional games of children.<sup>8</sup>

There were no legal and few formal attempts to censor ballad-singing and story-telling. Children were not forbidden to hear unsuitable stories and, since there were few stories specifically designed for them, children were exposed primarily to tales meant for adults. A natural form of censorship emerged. Raconteurs were restricted informally by an audience that insisted upon reasonable credibility in all stories. Story-telling was regarded as an art in which the "extremes of horror and beauty were preserved from wanton cruelty and sickly sweetness".<sup>9</sup>

Yet, occasionally, even before print, the telling of tales was considered dangerous by legal authorities. As early as the sixth century the monarchy and the Church attempted, though unsuccessfully, to suppress Welsh Bards. Their tale-telling incited the common people to such a high pitch, that the authorities considered them capable of inciting rebellion.<sup>10</sup> It was this, and other similar events, which caused itinerant minstrels and poets to become increasingly known as rogues, vagabonds, and vagrants, and categorized among the unruly elements of society.

Not until the eleventh century did monasteries begin to make written copies of some of the most popular of the secular tales. From the eleventh to the thirteenth century poets created epics out of the numerous and varied tales clustering around a single legendary character such as Charlemagne or Alexander, and myths centring on beings like Siegfried, Arthur and

Rustum. Firdusi (932-1020) was the earliest of such poets, spending twenty years to consolidate all the Persian tales of Rustum into a single epic poem (completed in 1010) describing a hero who lived several centuries, fought demons and dragons for days on end, and was finally slain only by treachery after unwittingly killing his own son. This legend is now known through Matthew Arnold's poem "Sohrab and Rustum."<sup>11</sup>

During the first century of printing, books continued to remain in the hands of the Church, noblemen, scholars, wealthy merchants, and gentlemen with private libraries. Records of collections in large private libraries indicate that they were almost entirely of a serious nature. However, a significant proportion of the annual literary output during the sixteenth century consisted of ballads, romances, and tales of highway robbery and gambling which combined with music and drama to form the entertainment of the lower-class majority. With the transition from an oral to a print culture, popular tales and ballads originating in an oral folk culture remained the most popular forms of entertainment and news.

### The First Two Centuries of Printing 1476-1695

William Caxton established the first printing press in England in 1476, and by 1485 Henry VII had asserted his authority over the press by appointing a "stationer to the king" and establishing a system of patents and monopolies to be granted printers by the crown.

The period from 1485 to 1695 represents a distinct period of literary censorship in England in which authority over, and control of, the press was considered a royal prerogative. Control of the press rapidly increased until its climax under Elizabeth Tudor and then gradually began to wane. It was a period characterized by pre-censorship, and all manuscripts were submitted to censors before publication, primarily to suppress heretical and seditious literature.

Concern over publications of a questionable morality appeared in the latter seventeenth century and prosecutions for obscene and lascivious books and pamphlets increased. Penalties for the publication of "immoral" literature were small monetary fines, insignificant compared to a combination of flogging, mutilation, heavy fines and imprisonment, or even execution, inflicted upon those guilty of sedition or heresy.

Despite severe penalties and determined efforts of the authorities, control of the press was often ineffectual and the illegal press continued to flourish alongside the licensed press.

### The Early Chapbook and Broadside Trade

When Caxton set up his press in England in 1476 he did little to form the taste of the age. He did not confront the well-established foreign competition in the classics, but devoted himself to satisfying the surest home market in romantic literature based on the legends of an oral culture that were already popular. His most famous

popular works include *The Canterbury Tales*, *Morte d'Arthur*, *Aesop's Fables*, *Reynard the Fox*, and *The Golden Legend*. These were assured success by rich patrons who displayed greater interest in vernacular literature as the English language improved and gained greater acceptance.

Caxton's successor, Wynkyn de Worde, followed the tradition of neglecting the legal, political, and learned book trade that had been granted patents by the crown. He confined his attention to a lighter more ephemeral kind of cheap booklet or pamphlet to satisfy the growing demands of the general public. Rather than relying upon rich patrons for financial support, de Worde was confident in his ability to assess the popular demands of his audience, and in his case, revenues from a wide circulation of his product replaced the need for wealthy patronage.

Extremely popular at this time were "broadsides" and "chapbooks." Broadsides were single sheets of paper printed on one side only and broadsheets were large uncut sheets of paper printed on both sides or a pamphlet formed from this sheet. Chapbooks consisted of a single sheet folded into a small booklet of eight to thirty-two pages. Most of these publications contained woodcut illustrations and sold at either a halfpenny or a penny.

Broadside proclamations were official notices of new laws, intrigues, battles, and peace treaties. They were fixed to posts and doors or their news was cried out on the streets. The typical content of broadsides and broadsheets often consisted of ballads. Some ballads summarized the whole story in a single subtitle of a sensational nature. The range of subjects included religious, political, criminal, romantic, superstitious, moralistic, tragic, bawdy, and amatory material. There was execution news, often in prose; and the "ghost-written" confessions of criminals sold in the streets at the time and place of execution. Many were simply reprinted traditional folk ballads, but others were more topical. During the Stuart period, such broadside ballads formed a spearhead of protest movements in the conflict between "Roundheads and Cavaliers" and had had a similar function during the Tudor conflicts between Protestants and Catholics. Those dealing with such controversial political and religious material were invariably unsigned to avoid the severe penalties for sedition and blasphemy.

Chapbooks began as printed folklore with woodcut illustrations. They had a wider scope than ballads, including old romances, fairy tales, ancient battles, warnings to sinners urging repentance, and shorter versions of shilling romances such as *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Seven Champions of Christendom*.

The following are typical broadside and chapbook titles from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries:

*The True Description of a Monstrous Chylde Borne in the Isle of Wight [1564]*

*Murder Upon Murder Committed by Thomas Sherwood, Alias,*

*Country Tom: and Elizabeth Evans, Alias, Canbrye Besse*  
[1635]

*The Strange and Wonderful Storm of Hail, which Fell in London*  
on the 18th of May 1680

*The Repenting Maids Sorrowful Lamentation for the Loss of Her*  
*True Love that Shot Himself in Soho* [1698]

*A New Song on the Birth of The Prince of Wales, Who Was Born*  
on Tuesday, November 9th, 1841

*Lamentation and Confession of J. R. Jeffrey, Who Now Lies*  
*Under Sentence of Death for the Wilful Murder of His Little Boy*  
[1866].<sup>12</sup>

There was a brisk trade in such reading matter for the masses, and more and more “hole-in-the-wall” printers sprang up in country towns to supply hawkers with wares which they sold throughout the countryside and at country fairs.

In the new age of print broadsides, broadsheets and chapbooks became the new carriers of tradition, while the streets and roads became the libraries and bookshops of the masses. Ballad sheets were posted on the walls of inns and cottages, or were sold from stalls in churchyards or marketplaces, hawked by pedlars and cried by “patterers.” This material continued and enlarged upon the fading oral tradition.

### Legal Censorship to 1640

Henry VIII rapidly increased royal control over the press. In 1538 a Decree of the Star Chamber forbade the publication of any book in English:

Onles upon examination made by some of his grace's privie counsayle, or other suche as his highness shall appoynte, they shall license so to do.<sup>13</sup>

Censorship was put into the hands of the Privy Council who looked for hidden seditious in even the most innocent publications.

Under Mary, the Stationers Company was incorporated in 1557, and everyone engaged in the book trade was compelled to belong to this company of Stationers. The book trade was made its own censor by investing the company with the power and obligation to censor all books before publication, and by empowering the Master and Wardens of the Company to search out and destroy unlicensed publications and presses.

Elizabeth sought to make the licensing system more efficient. The power of the Stationers Company to regulate the trade of books was confirmed, but at the same time a definitive list of those empowered to license books was established. All publications, including ballads and broadsides, were to be registered in the Stationers' Register by date, name of publication, and author's name. Pro-Catholic and Puritan literature were considered the biggest threat and a series of proclamations were issued to suppress such literature. In 1586 the Star Chamber limited all printing to Oxford, Cambridge, and London, where it could be easily supervised; and only by special permission were new presses

to be set up. These severe restrictions remained in force until the court was abolished in 1641.

The Tudor policy of strict control over the press was thought to maintain the safety of the state. Sovereigns acted on the principle that the peace of the realm demanded the suppression of all dissenting opinion and that only the Crown, by exercising its prerogative, was capable of controlling the press. There was little opposition from parliament, publishers, printers, or public opinion to this repressive legislation.

The dangers of popular literature were recognized as early as 1543 when an Act “for the Advancement of True Religion and for the Abolishment of the Contrary” was specifically directed at the broadside trade. It claimed that

froward and malicious minds intending to subvert the true exposition of scripture, have taken upon them, by printing ballads, rhymes, etc. subtilly and craftily to instruct his highness people, and specially the youth of this realm untruly.<sup>14</sup>

The comprehensive system of press regulation that had evolved by the end of the Tudor period was primarily concerned with stamping out sedition and blasphemy. It was to this end that the Stuarts inherited, extended, and modified the regulatory machinery. Charles I extended the number of authorized licensers to deal with the growing book trade and extended censorship to all imported books.

During the seventeenth century absolute control over the publication of news was vested in the crown. It was the King's prerogative to “Prohibit the printing of all newsbooks [called corantos] and pamphlets of news whatsoever not licensed by his majesty's authority as tending to breach the peace and disturbance of the Kingdom.”<sup>15</sup>

Despite these restrictions, many corantos were published in the Netherlands and imported to England, or the King's prerogative was ignored and “lavish and licentious talking in matters of state” continued to be published at home. Thomas Archer was imprisoned for the publication of a newsbook in England and his press was confiscated in 1621. Later that year, Nicholas Bourne and Nathaniel Butter were permitted to print the first “coranto” published “by authority” on the condition that the contents of each issue were first examined by the Privy Council. Butter and Bourne enjoyed a monopoly on news publication until 1632. They were restricted to foreign news and forbidden to print controversial discussions of war and politics. Unlicensed newsbooks continued to appear, however.<sup>16</sup> In 1632 the Butter and Bourne monopoly was cancelled and was not restored until 1638, with censorship still a requirement.

Quite clearly the fear of the wide dissemination of damaging public opinion was the prime motivation behind the establishment of the royal right to control news. For the most part, however, licensing was inefficient; and when newspapers were successfully

suppressed other vehicles such as news ballads filled the gap.

### The Earliest Newspapers: Newsbooks and Corantos

Under the Tudors, no domestic news was allowed to be printed in corantos, and even descriptions of news abroad were risky. The Stuarts intermittently allowed foreign news, but domestic news could not be printed on a regular basis until 1741. Nevertheless, news was an important public demand, and restrictions on newspapers led to the provision of news in the form of fiction. News dealing with murders, fires, monstrous births, and other sensational topics was usually safe from prosecution, and accounts of these events were vividly described in ballad form. Entries in the Stationer's Register show that this type of news outnumbered all others. Whenever an incident promising to make good copy occurred, the subject was promptly registered as the subject of a news ballad.

As an example, the John Fitz murders of 1605 were the topic of numerous ballads and newsbooks. The typical titles of three versions of this tale were:

*A Narration of the Bloody Murthers Committed by the Handes of Sir John Fyghe a Knight of Devonshire.*

*A Ballet Upon the Lamentable Murthers of Sir John Fitz Executed Upon Himself and Others.*

*Sir John Fitz His Ghost, or the Doleful Dreams of Lusty Jack His Chief Associate and Companion in Mischief.<sup>17</sup>*

Domestic tragedies of ordinary people sometimes appeared like the story of a soldier "cutting off his wives head, by reason one called him Cuckold."<sup>18</sup> The most sensational news always appeared on the front page of a newsbook. Widespread demand for such news was guaranteed, for any newspaper or broadside which could offer thrills or anything that would serve as gossip.

News Ballads dealt with topics such as:

Trew and Dreadfull new tydings of blode and Brymstone which God hath caused to Rayne from heaven within and without the Cytie of Strayle Sonet, with a wonderful apparition seen by a citizen of the same Cytie named Hans Germer which mett him in the field as he was travalinge on the waie.

and

The Norfolk gent his will and testament and howe he comytted the keepinge of his children to his owne brother who deelite most wickedly with them and how God plagued him for it.<sup>19</sup>

The last ballad later became known simply as "The Babes in the Wood" and was an all-time favourite, even as late as the early nineteenth century.

As another example of ingenuity, in 1627 Thomas Wakely published an extra sheet which opened up to a double-page spread to be inserted into the newsbook or sold separately to the illiterate. It was a realistic full size illustration of a knife with a caption that read: "the true portraiture of the poisoned knife both in length and breadth" with which a "Jesuited villain" had tried to assassinate the Duke of Buckingham. Wakely spun a

circumstantial story around how it had fallen into his hands.<sup>20</sup> The story became widely popular and Wakely was able to sell a large number of broadsheets.

Ballads selling at one penny also achieved a wide circulation. Three thousand were registered between 1557 and 1709 but at least three times this many were turned out by the unlicensed press.<sup>21</sup> Between 1620 and 1642 at least two hundred copies of one thousand different single sheets and small quarto volumes of news were published and distributed. In fact, these figures gave a very conservative estimate of news circulation.<sup>22</sup>

News sheets were irregularly published and often documented only one event. General topics were foreign battles, treaties, royal domestic life, war preparations, proclamations, the death of kings, the oppression of Protestants, a general's burning and pillaging, sea fights, invasions, shipwrecks, and criminal executions.

Since the English government had banned all domestic and controversial news except for trivial items, most news sheets and ballads were forced to deal in sensation and violence to satisfy the innate public demand for news. This type of sensational news was criticized for being nonsensical by more thoughtful men. William Lombarde, as an example, thought that news books and broadsides were making the whole art of printing an absurdity, and suggested that a body of twelve men to be called the Governors of England should be set up and given licensing powers to check the flow of sensational news. The government preferred sensation to sedition and ignored his suggestion.<sup>23</sup>

Newsbooks continued to feature "fabricated" and "doctored" news. The ballad form was most popular with the illiterate, as the printer's customers wanted to be entertained as well as informed. Illustrations were also necessary to maintain and increase sizable circulations. However, wood-blocks, used for illustration, were expensive and were often used repeatedly for similar news items. Often the "woeful lamentation" of a condemned man was published at the earliest moment possible. John Wolfe's newsbook illustration of a multiple hanging came from a single block which could be cut into parts to depict the correct number of criminals executed whenever this type of news came up. Extra copies of the illustration were printed and sold to the semi-literate market solely for the grisly picture of unsparring detail.<sup>24</sup>

Many of the news publications during the interregnum (1649-1660) contained vicious attacks by Cavaliers and Puritans against each other rather than "real" news. Cromwell's suppression of newsbooks gave rise to the "Grub Street Pamphleteers" who, one commentator noted, "thank their lucky stars, and congratulate their own good fortune, if any sad accident fall out, of Fire happen in the City: and if a Witch or Murder be condemned to die, rather than he shall want a winding sheet, they'll be so charitable as to lend them half of theirs."<sup>25</sup>

News during the interregnum period, delighting in the grotesque and sensational, furnished readers with a wide variety of grisly fare. Ballads dealt typically with such content as a woman killed by the devil, a girl and a brewer scalded to death, the Protestant Massacre, and, of course, love songs. The Licensor's moral standards were not high and many publications were granted licences simply because they avoided politics.

### Legal Censorship Between the Civil War and 1695

Between 1641 and 1643 literary censorship was removed and the press flourished. In 1643 the English parliament imposed an ordinance upon printers and booksellers. All publications were prohibited and an elaborate system of search and seizure was implemented even to the extent of military occupation of the City of London in 1648. It was this order which provoked John Milton to write and publish *Areopagitica, or Appeal for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing* in 1644. He expressed the intellectual tragedy of official censorship, "as good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God."<sup>26</sup> Petitions for press liberty were ignored, by the end of the Commonwealth period the press was brought to heel. The death of Cromwell in 1658 meant the end of censorship and all manner of publications were issued openly.

Charles II returned to power in 1660 and a new Act provided that books would be licensed if they contained nothing "contrary to good life and good manners."<sup>27</sup> All books were to be licensed and the number of master printers and apprentices was reduced; the Stationers Company's right to search and seizure was abolished and given to the office of Surveyor of the Press. Roger L'Estrange was first appointed to this position in 1663 and given a monopoly on news publication. This Licensing Act ran until 1695.

In 1695 the House of Commons rejected the renewal of the Licensing Act. This was not entirely a libertarian move but in part a reaction against the corruption of censors. Those responsible for the licensing of the press were accused of extortion, fraud, and theft. The Licensing Act was described as ineffectual in silencing the press and tended instead to increase the popularity of scandalous illegal publications. Thus, after 1695, the press was freed from pre-censorship, and censorship continued under common law, and only after the item had been published.

### A Question of Morality

Much of the output of the early English press was translations of the classics. The Puritans initially encouraged the translation movement, hoping that the rationalistic element in the classics would help to overthrow the feudal and medieval ideals and, at the same time, strengthen the position of Protestantism. The Puritans held that whatever evil was presented in the classics was

different from that present in the bawdy ballads and romances. A knowledge of vice was considered necessary to a complete moral education, and the ultimate responsibility for the use to which reading was put was to remain with the individual.

Traditionalists among the clergy and scholarly opposed the translations. They believed that general access to rationalistic literature would mean the disintegration of all venerable institutions including motherhood, the church, feudal economy, and dialectic philosophy. Proponents of the exclusive learning view were dubbed "Zoili." Nevertheless, Puritan patronage of the translation movement continued until the Zoili directed attention to the heathen nature of the classics. Thereafter the Puritans could no longer overlook their inherent immorality. They withdrew their patronage from printers of classical translations and virtually ended the English classic translation trade.<sup>28</sup>

The Root and Branch Petition signed by 15,000 London citizens and presented to Parliament in 1640 contained the most explicit condemnation of the immorality of popular literature of the period. This petition was an attempt to draw attention to the evils of society caused by the existing government and asked that the government "with all its dependencies, roots and branches" be abolished.<sup>29</sup>

Among the evils it cited was the

swarming of lascivious, idle, and unprofitable books and pamphlets, playbooks and ballads; as namely Ovid's *Fits of Love*; the Parliament of Women which came out at the dissolving of the last parliament; Barne's poems; Parkers Ballads in disgrace of religion, to the increase of all vice, and with drawing of the people from reading studying and learning the Word of God and other good books.<sup>30</sup>

It further demanded that:

... all vaine and ungodly bookees, ballads, love songs, and lascivious bookees, and vaine pamphlets, may be called in and no more such may be ever tolerated hereafter or dispersed either in print, or in manuscript; which vaine bookees, ballads and pamphlets, have taken deeper impressions upon the hearts of many thousands to draw them to love and delight in those actions of sin into which they have been seduced by reading them.<sup>31</sup>

The crime of obscenity was not fully recognized in English law until 1725; the authorities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries believed they had more to fear from blasphemy and sedition. Pressure on the authorities to take action against obscene or lascivious books increased and resulted in several prosecutions in the later years of the seventeenth century. The Act of 1662 provided that books should not contain anything "contrary to good life and good manners." This seemed to provide a base for the suppression of obscene literature, but it was vague and censorship continued to be haphazard and irregular in this area.

The Puritan literary ethic insisted that reading must be serious and morally edifying and criticized all light literature along with the obscene. While support for the

Puritan view grew, it nonetheless often coexisted with an attitude that was more tolerant of, and often amused by, the same literature which seemed to scandalize the Puritans. It was the Puritan view, however, that was gradually incorporated into legal censorship of literature to prevent the corruption of the King's subjects.

### **Summary**

There was no censorship specifically aimed at “violence” in literature during this period, except when such “violent” content was combined with seditious intent. Roger L'Estrange, Surveyor of the Press in 1663, was concerned that the unlicensed press made extremely healthy profits from forbidden books. He specifically referred to a quarto book entitled *Killing No Murder* published in Holland in 1657, and imported into England after the failure of a plot on Cromwell's life. This justification of tyrannicide could be illegally sold for five shillings when it was worth no more than fourpence.<sup>32</sup>

Increasing concern over the supposed ability of literature to corrupt morals and incite people to violence coincided with increases in literacy. The English school system was well established by the seventeenth century, and there were schools for all classes. Public schools served the wealthy and free schools run by the local clergy existed for the poor, while grammar schools had been established for the rising middle class. There was an ample supply of such schools with low fees and with attendance rolls that compare favourably to those of today's country schools. It was from the newly educated middle and working classes that the bulk of adherents to popular fiction would emerge.<sup>33</sup>

## Chapter Two

# Guarding the Public Morality

### **Introduction to Popular Literature 1695-1832**

The revolutionary turbulence of the period from 1695 to 1832 was reflected in its popular literature. Most government attempts to censor popular literature were based on a fear of internal subversion and violent revolution that would be the end result of the revolutionary political tracts that came to dominate a considerable proportion of the broadside and chapbook trade.

“Teaching the masses to read would lead to anarchy.” This view was widely held by government officials and the upper classes. The Evangelicals and Methodists believed, to the contrary, that instructing the masses to read would instill in them the hard-working virtues of a Protestant ethic. To this end, a system of Sunday Schools was established and religious tracts, disguised as broadsides and chapbooks, were widely circulated to provide the masses with proper reading material and to counteract sedition and immorality.

The increasing number of prosecutions for publishing obscene literature between 1695 and 1832 may be attributed to the instigations of voluntary societies which acted as “guardians of the public morality.” These societies, along with numerous prominent citizens who shared their views, set the level of public tolerance. Public opinion thus became the primary means of censoring the “immoral” in literature. With the rise of the novel and the circulating library, this widely available new literary genre became the butt of most attacks on “immorality” in literature.

### **Legal Controls over Printing**

After the Licensing Act expired in 1695, the monopoly of the Company of Stationers was broken, and the number of printers increased and trade expanded. The 1709 Copyright Act of Queen Anne gave rights to authors, as opposed to printers, and also aided in expansion of the printing trade. Governments regarded the press as a threat and feared popular involvement in affairs of state. Reinstatement of prior-censorship methods was undesirable, but the authorities believed libel and seditious libel to be insufficiently handled by the courts.

The Stamp Act of 1712 became the new and indirect means of press control. This Act was designed to discourage political opposition by imposing a stamp duty of one penny per sheet for newspapers and two shillings for each sheet on one copy of each edition of a pamphlet that exceeded half a sheet. This “Tax on Knowledge” would force publications either to raise their prices out of the reach of usual subscribers or, alternatively, to accept a subsidy from the political group in power and maintain its price at a reasonable level. Threat of withdrawal of financial support usually brought newspapers and pamphlets into conformity with the political opinion of the party then in power. The stamp duty was raised five times until it reached fourpence per sheet in 1815. The primary means of press censorship became a combination of financial and political coercion, and remained thus until 1855 when this oppressive tax was removed.

In addition, Parliament employed “messengers of the press” to search out seditious and libellous publications which threatened to undermine its authority. The most vigorous censorship was exercised against the Jacobites who advocated the succession of James III, the Pretender, after the death of Queen Anne. The height of this censorship followed the Jacobite invasions of 1715 and 1745. Vigorous censorship attempts were also characteristic of the period from 1760 to 1832 when fears of political revolution, inspired by revolutions in France and America, were paramount.

Numerous printers, authors, and publishers were tried and convicted in the courts for seditious and blasphemous attacks on the state, and the British ministry frequently resorted to repressive and unconstitutional means of dealing with the press. Offensive printers were imprisoned and brought to financial ruin without a court trial.

As the stamp duties increased, forcing newspaper prices up, newspaper reading rooms and coffee houses sprang up where a single copy of a newspaper or pamphlet passed through twenty or more different hands. The government responded by demanding that all such meeting places must also be licensed; in 1799 an Act was passed “for the more effectual Suppression

of Societies established for Seditious and Treasonable Practices." In addition to the imposition of heavy fines on unlicensed libraries and reading rooms, all indoor and outdoor lecturing or debating places had to be similarly licensed. Strict registers were kept of those employed in the printing industry to control means of press production. The name and address of the printer were to appear on every copy of a publication. Infringement of this law entailed a fine of twenty pounds for every *copy* of a book issued. In thirty years many of the provisions of the act would be disregarded, but at the time of its inception the law served to quell fears of a French invasion to inspire revolution in Britain.

The early years of the nineteenth century saw authors and publishers fined and imprisoned for denouncing Britain's participation in the Napoleonic wars. After the peace of 1815, the anti-government campaign of the press became more virulent, to the point of advocating violent actions against government ministers as a means for reform. The underfed, unenfranchised unemployed were dissatisfied with their leaders in the post-war economic depression. One pamphlet included an illustration entitled, "The Old Black Cock and His Dunghill Advisors in Jeopardy," which showed cabinet ministers, judges, and priests hanging from lamp posts under a sign that read, "Justice Triumphant."<sup>2</sup>

In 1817 William Hone was tried for publishing profane and seditious parodies. As a result of his acquittal, charges were dropped against other publishers who had also issued parodies, and the government did not attempt another series of press prosecutions until 1819. As a result of indignation over the "Peterloo" massacre of reformers, a Member of Parliament published a bitter address. Sir Francis Burdett was charged with seditious libel, tried, convicted, fined, and imprisoned in 1820. Many others were similarly fined, flogged, or incarcerated for their publication of ideas on socio-political reform. Between 1821 and 1834, the number of prosecutions for such offences declined as the government's statutory power over the press was gradually being eroded. Legal reform stipulated that a case was to be tried within twelve months of the charge laid; suspended prosecutions could no longer be used to intimidate dissident publishers. In 1825, cases of criminal libel would no longer be heard by "special" jurors chosen for their penchant for maintaining the political status quo. The Reform Bill of 1832 offered a growing freedom of the press and a new style of monarchy. The stamp duty was reduced to an ineffectual one penny per sheet in 1836 and was finally abolished in 1855. Political radicalism eventually died down, and it became increasingly evident that attempts at general censorship of the press were hopeless.

Censorship throughout the period was based on the belief that inflammatory opinions would incite readers to violence and revolution, and thus undermine established authorities. Government concern and attempted

control over violent content was, again, only related to sedition; the basic concern was with the advocacy and illustration of violence toward government officials.

Important minds of the period, such as Jeremy Bentham and Samuel Coleridge, rejected the government's belief in the power of literature. They argued that it was improbable that men would be stirred to violence by what they read, and that literature could not have such a widespread general effect on the population.<sup>2</sup>

### Obscene Literature

The first organization to set itself up as the guardian of public morals was the Society for the Reformation of Manners founded in 1692. Its declared aim was to crusade for national reformation by enforcing laws against sabbath-breaking, profanity, drunkenness, and sexual immorality. It was not concerned with obscene literature at first because many of those for whose morals it feared were, in fact, illiterate. Yet, as literacy increased, the Society became concerned that immoral literature might corrupt the morals of the readers and it concentrated principally on initiating prosecutions against obscene literature.

The first major attempt to deal with obscene literature came in 1707. James Read and Angell Carter were unsuccessfully prosecuted for publishing a sequence of poems entitled *The Fifteen Plagues of a Maiden-Head*. The general attitude of the court toward obscene literature was reflected in the decision of Justice Powell.

This is for printing bawdy stuff, that reflects on no person: and a libel must be against some particular person or persons, or against the government. It is stuff not fit to be mentioned publicly. If there is no remedy in the Spiritual court, it does not follow there must be a remedy here . . . It tends to the corruption of manners but that is not sufficient for us to punish.<sup>3</sup>

When Edmund Curll was tried and convicted for publishing the second English edition of *Venus in the Cloister: or, the Nun in her Smock* (1724), the law of obscenity was established. Curll was convicted under a common law precedent which described acts tending to corrupt the morals of the King's subjects and that were against the King's peace as criminal offences.<sup>4</sup> From the time of Curll's conviction, the Court of the King's Bench was set up as the official guardian of the public morals.

By the time the Society for the Reformation of Manners ceased its activities in 1738, it had created a climate of moral opinion for national reformation that was supported by numerous authors and publishers. An urge for purity and moral reformation spread through English literature with a growing awareness that the newly literate lower classes, and especially women and children, should be protected from a fate worse than illiteracy; that is, from moral corruption.

Although the government was willing to intensify the campaign against obscene literature, prosecutions were

arbitrary, haphazard, and ineffectual in stamping out immoral books. In 1787 "A Proclamation for the Encouragement of Piety and Virtue, and for preventing and punishing Vice, Profaneness and Immorality" was issued. The proclamation gave precise reference to the need to suppress "all loose and licentious Prints, Books, and Publications dispensing Poison to the Minds of the Young and Unwary, and to punish the Publishers and Vendors thereof."<sup>5</sup> This proclamation was prompted by William Wilberforce to give legal recognition to the dangers of illiteracy, and he founded The Proclamation Society in the same year to succeed the Society for the Reformation of Manners. The Proclamation Society was primarily concerned with the suppression of profane or obscene literature, and Wilberforce was convinced of the need for a private organization to deal with this type of material.

In our free state it is peculiarly needful to obtain these ends by the agency of some voluntary association; for thus only can those moral principles be guarded, which of old were under the immediate protection of the government. It thus becomes to us, like the ancient censorship, the guardian of the religion and morals of the people. The Attorney-General and Secretary of State, who alone in our country can be thought at all to fill this post, are too much cramped by their political relations to discharge its duties with effect; yet some such official check on vice is absolutely needed. It is not here as with personal injury, which will always be suppressed by private prosecution; for though the mischief done by blasphemous and indecent publications and other incentives to licentiousness be greater than most private wrongs, yet it is so fractional, and divided amongst so many thousands, that individuals can scarcely be expected to take up the cause of virtue.<sup>6</sup>

The founding of the Society was followed by a wave of prosecutions for publishing "obscene libel." Their efforts were prompted by a concern with the effects obscene literature would have on the working class, and on women and children. The chances of being undone by the "hot-bed" of a circulating library increased as illiteracy no longer offered protection to the innocent mind.

In 1795, the Proclamation Society ceased its activities, but was succeeded only six years later by the Society for the Suppression of Vice and the Encouragement of Religion and Virtue. The new Society carried out a series of private prosecutions to suppress the publication of obscene books and prints. Between 1801 and 1817 it was successful in forty prosecutions and drove the dealers in pornography underground.

#### **The Rise of the Novel and the Circulating Library**

The new literary form, the novel, was rooted in the oldest social custom – in the telling of folk tales and the singing of ballads and in the oral tradition of the narrative. Clearly, the preference of the growing reading public was for fiction. James Lackington made a classic observation in 1791 that "all ranks and degrees now read." While Lackington's observation was not really accurate, nevertheless wide circulation of reading

material was achieved, not through universal literacy, but by the semi-literate gathering around someone who then read aloud.<sup>7</sup> As the number of capable readers increased, opposition to reading for pleasure grew. Criticism also increased with the establishment of circulating libraries which facilitated a wide circulation of novels. Because novels continued to be three volumes in length and sold for at least six shillings per volume, the majority of potential readers could not afford to purchase them outright. Circulating libraries charged a relatively small annual fee, and allowed their subscribers to borrow as many books as they could read.

Objections to novel reading were principally made on moral grounds for two reasons. First, moral judgments were imposed on the novel by middle-class conceptions of conduct and practical morality.<sup>8</sup> Reading was supposed to be serious and educational, and readers were supposed to avoid the frivolous type of literature that encouraged rapid, inattentive and almost unconscious reading habits. Second, critics warned that reading by the lower orders was inconsistent with their life of manual labour, especially when reading seemed to be diabolically designed to "unsettle the stolid peace of mind necessary to the acceptance of a lowly status."<sup>9</sup> Employers, economists, and even some of the poor themselves believed that

Reading, writing and arithmetic are . . . very pernicious to the poor . . . Men who are to remain and end their days in a laborious, tiresome and painful station of life, the sooner they are put on it at first, the more patiently they'll submit to it ever after.<sup>10</sup>

Specific censures were launched against all aspects of novel reading from the actual location of reading, which seemed to the critics to be any place imaginable, and supplanting all other activity, to the speed of consuming novels, which seemed to support the view that no mental activity, knowledge, taste, or judgment was required.<sup>11</sup>

It seemed that a new literary "balance of power" favouring ease of entertainment had arrived with the eighteenth century. "The Rise of the Novel" was described as "Total Revolution whereby writing was commercialized."<sup>12</sup> Literature was released from the classical critical tradition by subjecting writing to the laws of a *laissez-faire* market that catered to a new reading public. The result was the democratization of literature which could lead only to anarchy.

Many criticisms were aimed at the dangers of the lower class aspiration to the leisure of their elite "better"; but the majority of the recruits to the new reading public were, in fact, middle-class, seldom extending below shopkeepers and tradesmen, with the exception of apprentices and the huge class of domestic servants. There were many forms of printed material available to the lower class at a much cheaper price including ballads, chapbooks, pamphlets and newspapers. The size of the reading public for books still

numbered only in the tens of thousands,<sup>13</sup> but opposition to the novel and its dissemination turned from distrust and fear of the possible influences to indignation and heated censure.

Circulating libraries did their largest and most profitable business in novels rather than in other publications that were considered more respectable (History, Biography, Travels, Poetry). In 1740 there were three circulating libraries in London and by 1800 there was an estimated 1,000 in Great Britain. The most famous of the circulating libraries of this period was William Lane's Minerva Press at 33 Leadenhall Street in London. It supplied the most popular and the most objectionable books. Lane knew his public and capitalized on their tastes, and Minerva became the symbol of cheap literature called "rubbish" or "ratsbane," and was the butt of much criticism.

Such complaints were not new. The first circulating library in Britain was established in 1725 by Allan Ramsay. Only three years later it was raided by officials after complaints of the pernicious influence of its novels had stirred the magistrate to action. Ramsay found out about the raid and had hidden all objectionable books, turning the investigation into a farce.

Minerva, a convenient epithet for contempt, was the chief purveyor of cheap literature from 1773 to 1820. At first, Lane concentrated on publishing cheap shilling pamphlets of catastrophic shipwrecks and accounts of criminal trials. After 1790 its mainstay was in popular novels dominated by the Gothic tradition. Its prospectus of 1794 stated that it was

open to such subjects as tended to the public good. The pages shall never be stained with what shall injure the mind or corrupt the heart. They shall neither be the Instrument of Private Defamation or Public Injury.<sup>14</sup>

Circulating libraries were referred to as the "slop-shops" in literature or "quack shops," or "sinks"; but even those who coined these terms, the upper class, frequented the circulating libraries, although few would admit to it.

Typical criticisms of the circulating library may be found in popular literary magazines of the period. A letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1808 demanded that the licensing of circulating libraries be instituted. The author believed that the freedom of the press led to the wide pernicious influence of the novel and noted that, while theatres were required to be licensed, they had fewer immoral consequences.

How few persons are likely to be contaminated by the performance of an immoral play, compared to those who may be rendered vicious by the publication of an immoral book, which may be circulated throughout the entire kingdom, and may enter every house . . . not a vile contemptible novel, or romance, but what will find its way to a circulating library.<sup>15</sup>

And in *The Monthly Review* of 1773, circulating libraries were called "palaces of scandal" and their proprietors called "men whose business it is to puzzle heads and corrupt hearts." The author of the article

warns that an Act of Parliament would soon be passed whereby institutions of this type would be closed and their owners "declared, like the players, rogues and vagabonds, the debauchers of morals, and the pest of society."<sup>16</sup>

Novels were supposed to have this immoral influence by setting up characters after whom women and children, and especially the poor, were tempted to model their lives. No type of character was satisfactory to all, but Richardson's Lovelace was the stock example for objectors, as Lovelace's evil qualities were delineated in far too much detail. Ideally, the novelist's duty was thought to be "to warn his reader against vice, without too plainly telling what it is."<sup>17</sup> Fielding's *Tom Jones* was also widely condemned for mingling vice and virtue in a fascinating character with the result of confusing the reader.

For the most part, objections were to the obscenity of sexual immorality that abounded in novels. Little concern was given to the kind of effects that Thomas Medwin noted regarding Percy Bysshe Shelley's boyhood experience with novels. Medwin and Shelley at the age of ten would resort "under the rose to a low circulating library [sic]" where they read tales of terror which were Shelley's favourite. "After supping on the horrors of the Minerva Press, he was subject to strange, and sometimes frightful dreams and was haunted by apparitions that bore all the resemblance of reality."<sup>18</sup>

Prohibitions of literature should originate in the home, and parents should not let children subscribe to the circulating libraries. Such was the theme of Joshua Collins's *A Practical Guide to Parents and Guardians in the Right Choice and Use of Books* published in 1802. He proposed the formation of book societies which would include only "innocent" works of fiction founded on "good principles."<sup>19</sup>

The novels which terrified Shelley were likely those of the Gothic tradition which were the most popular in the period 1790-1820. The best sellers at the Minerva were Regina Maria Roche's *Children of the Abbey* with the "spice of Gothic terror" and "scenes carefully calculated to freeze the blood,"<sup>20</sup> and Francis Lathom's twenty-three novels that "cater to the fashionable taste for terror with a care for detail of exciting incidents of murders, banditti, dungeons and thunderstorms."<sup>21</sup>

The prototype of the Gothic novel was Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk*, published in 1796, although the Gothic novel dates back to Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764. Lewis forewarned his readers in the preface of "extremes in loving and hating" but continued to give vivid descriptions of wantonness and sadism among monks and nuns; burial alive, the Inquisition, blood drunk from skulls, murder, death by haunting, incest, and all manner of inventions for the reader to enjoy. Even the Marquis de Sade thought *The Monk* was the best of "ces romans nouveaux."<sup>22</sup>

Yet it was not the violence in these novels that was criticized. The *Monthly Review* in 1797 complained that

the vein of obscenity made *The Monk* unfit for general circulation, and the *Critical Review* warned that *The Monk* would “inflame the fleshly appetites” and “inculcate the first rudiments of vice” and “give alarm to the still sleeping passions.”<sup>23</sup>

“Bluebooks” or “Shilling Shockers” selling for sixpence, or a shilling, abridged and imitated the three-volume Gothic novels in the style of Lewis’s *The Monk*, Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* and Mrs. Radcliffe’s *The Italian* into 30 or 70 pages to make Gothic thrills available to almost everyone. These chapbook-like stories were extremely popular, especially among adolescents. They cut out all boring details and capitalized on sensational events. The stories were set either in a Gothic castle with a bluebeard baron, or in a monastery or convent with its murderous monk. These villains seduce heroines and harass heroes and, although the tormentors learn eventually that “the wages of sin is death,” the typical ending is where the hero grasps the corpse of the heroine and expires. “Bluebooks” were deeply concerned with giving their quota of thrills, and elegant engravings of the most sensational and lurid incident adorned the frontispiece to convince the customer that the story was horrid enough to invest in.<sup>24</sup>

Mrs. Radcliffe described the use of terror by novelists as the “dear, wild illusions of a creative mind.” She argued that the terrible and the sublime could not be separated in art, and that the elevating power of the terrible restores a sense of mystery to life and rouses the dormant imagination.<sup>25</sup> Yet when terror was made into a commodity and combined with sadism for popular appeal, critics were afraid that the decadence of the epoch would lead to the collapse of the entire civilization. The observation that the majority of the people continued to live normal and healthy lives despite this “cascade of human suffering and disturbance” led to a realization that “there are more tongues cut out, more eyes put out, but nothing else has changed.”<sup>26</sup>

### Chapbooks and Broadsides

Contrary to popular belief, the Education Act of 1870 did not create the mass reading public, as a large working-class readership already existed before 1870. Charity schools had been in existence since the late seventeenth century, and by 1723 reported an attendance figure of 23,421.<sup>27</sup> Sunday Schools were established by Evangelicals by the mid-eighteenth century. Day Schools with a monitorial system began in the early nineteenth century along with Workhouse Schools and Schools of Industry provided by factory owners, while “Dame Schools” run by concerned individuals were common in the eighteenth century. The majority of children attended one of these if only for a brief time. Though not literate by our standards, most acquired the ability to read and provided the base of a much larger reading public than is generally thought. The ability to read was also encouraged by

numerous handbills posted on the walls of city buildings and available for as little as a halfpenny. By 1851 it was estimated that two-thirds of the British population could read and there were two million children attending school.<sup>28</sup>

By the late eighteenth century there were many penny tracts advocating political reform, which were considered revolutionary in nature. Tom Paine’s *The Rights of Man* was not prosecuted until 1792, when it appeared in cheap broadsheet form. William Cobbett, the most celebrated radical journalist, also wrote for the lower-class majority in cheap editions. It is not surprising therefore that parliamentary debates reflected concern over the “inflammatory” and “seditious” nature of radical literature as being the principal cause of rioting and violence.<sup>29</sup> Attempts to control working-class reading were sometimes quite repressive, such as the 1799 Act for Stricter Control over the printing trade, with flogging and imprisonment meted out for infringement; or legalistic such as The Six Acts of 1819 that attempted to deal with “twopenny trash”; or “inspirational” by use of counter-propaganda issued by religious societies to denounce the radical press and preach religion and morality.<sup>30</sup> In the end, these attempts failed to control the dissemination of cheap literature, but similar inspirational efforts by the Religious Tract Society and Hannah More showed some signs of success.

Hannah More was an Evangelist who supported the work of the Proclamation Society and the Society for the Suppression of Vice. She was convinced that depraved, sinful, and idle chapbooks and broadsides would corrupt the lower classes, yet she fervently believed in the Sunday School movement that taught them to read. Her Cheap Repository Tracts published in the 1790s were an attempt to provide suitable reading material for the masses and to counteract the ideas of the French Revolution. She adapted these tracts to popular taste with eye-catching titles and suggestive woodcuts. John Evans and John Marshall, leading printers in the chapbook trade, were employed to print the tracts in exactly the same format as familiar cheap street literature, and to get them into the hawker’s wares. More dwelt on the horrors of sin in an attempt to reform the masses and alter the content of their reading matter. Two million of these tracts were sold in 1795 and formed a major part of the cottagers’ libraries for the next thirty years.<sup>31</sup>

The Religious Tract Society was founded in 1799 in an attempt to draw the audience away from the “vile publications” sold on the streets by hawkers. Their tracts were similar to those published by Hannah More and were distributed free in quantities of about 40,000 at public executions. The Tract Society blamed anarchist journalists and inflammatory placards for inciting the turbulence of the Luddite rebellions of 1811-1813. Evidence for this claim came from a confession in the 1813 York Trials where one of the

defendants confessed he had worked in a factory where accounts of machine-breaking were repeatedly read.<sup>32</sup> The Tract Society and Hannah More were convinced that their publications had prevented rioting in a number of instances.

The *Eclectic Review* in 1806 lauded the work of The Religious Tract Society in counteracting a situation described as follows:

We have long lamented that the diffusion of virtue, and that easy circulation of knowledge has been perverted into the service of licentiousness.<sup>33</sup>

In fact, both the Tract Society and Hannah More regarded themselves as responsible for the safety of youthful and lower-class readers.

A well-defined criminal class had come into existence by the early eighteenth century along with a complex system of dealing with crime including law courts, informers, and crime reporters. Theft increased remarkably, and the golden age of the highwayman was signalled by the popularity of *The Beggar's Opera* in 1728. Punishments for crimes against property became extremely severe and often meant execution by hanging or transportation and a few historians have noted that for many people the punishment for crime was feared more than the wrath of God for committing the sin. It was commonly held that "Hell is almost bound by Newgate's wall."<sup>34</sup>

Public sympathies began to move toward the criminal, and Daniel Defoe presented his whores, highwaymen, shoplifters, and adventurers as normal people victimized by circumstances. The late years of the eighteenth century foreshadowed the Victorian fascination with murder, and the famous James Catnach set up his press in the infamous Seven Dials district of London to take advantage of the growing market for literature of this nature.

Crime and violence had always been popular in chapbook tales and broadside news but for Catnach it was the mainstay of his trade from 1792 to 1841. He was most adept at putting out crime and scandalous stories at the right moment, and this was the secret of his success. Any dying speech or confession of a criminal could reach sales in the millions over a period of years. As an example, Catnach made £500 by selling, for one penny, accounts of the sensational murder of William Weare by John Thurtell in 1832.<sup>35</sup> Catnach also made large profits on sales of dramatic accounts of the activities of famous highwaymen of the early eighteenth century such as Dick Turpin and Jack Shepherd. All sensational crimes of the period were printed in great detail and these cheap publications were widely circulated. The murder of Ann Williams by William Jones in 1823, the murder of Maria Marten by William Corder in the Red Barn in 1828, the body-snatching crimes of Burke and Hare in 1831, and the murder of Mrs. Brown by James Greenacre in 1837 were among the most popular. The last dying speech and confession of William Corder sold 1,166,000 copies.<sup>36</sup>

Some sensational crimes were fabricated when business was slow and sold as "cocks" or "catch pennies." These were fictitious contrivances created to obtain money from the public, often consisting of descriptions of murders, fires, and terrible accidents that never happened. These fictitious narrations in verse or prose were sold in the streets as true accounts, while the hawker often changed the locale of the awful event to suit the tastes of the neighbourhood in which he was offering his delusions.

One writer notes: "No more ghastly sight could be imagined than one of Jemmy's embellishments of an execution."<sup>37</sup> Catnach had a large number of blocks to illustrate any number of criminals that were to be hanged, and among his stock of blocks were several well-known scenes of horrible and awful crimes to add to his vivid descriptions. Charles Hindley says of Catnach:

There can be little doubt that Jemmy Catnach, the great publisher of the Seven Dials, had his mind mostly centred upon the chronicling of doubtful scandals, fabulous duels between ladies of fashion, 'cooked' assassinations, and sudden deaths of eminent individuals, apocryphal elopements, real or catchpenny accounts of murders, impossible robberies, delusive suicides, dark deeds, and – though last, not least, in his love – public executions, *vulgo* 'Hanging Matches', to which was usually attached the all-important and necessary 'Sorrowful Lamentations' or 'Copy of Affectionate Verses', which according to the established custom, the criminal composed in the condemned cell the night before his execution.<sup>38</sup>

Catnach and his "Grub Street" compatriots produced almost the whole of lower-class literature until the penny newspapers of the 1830s, which then carried on the tradition of sensational and violent crime literature for the masses, at the same time replacing the broadside and chapbook trade.<sup>39</sup>

### Newspapers

The total audience for newspapers at this time was only about a half a million, acknowledging that they changed hands twenty times in the coffee houses, bars and reading rooms. The Stamp Tax had, in fact, raised the prices of most newspapers out of the reach of the majority of the people.

As early as 1708 and 1711 newspapers appeared "made to order both for the man to whom the other reading of the age seemed either forbiddingly profane or portentously dull."<sup>40</sup> These were the years in which Joseph Addison and Richard Steele founded their *Spectator* and *Tatler*, to provide moral reading with an emphasis on practical knowledge. While both Addison and Steele supported the idea of national reformation, their ideas did not circulate widely.

Far more popular were newspapers that purveyed scandal at a cheap price. The most extensively read of these were *Rambler's* and *Ranger's* Magazines which gave accounts of the sexual scandals of high and low society, accounts of criminal prosecutions, and even

explicit illustrations, names, and addresses of prostitutes. Eventually many of these publications were forced either to change their moral tone or to close down by the Proclamation Society.<sup>41</sup> Again, criticisms were founded on the belief that obscenity and sexual immorality would corrupt. Marked sadism and fascination with flagellation were not widely criticized as long as such violence predominated over explicit sexual descriptions. Once again we see that sexual licentiousness was considered far more dangerous than graphic descriptions of violence.

### Summary

The period of 1695-1832 was characterized by attempts at legal censorship of sedition in literature that was believed to be the source of violent mass uprisings. The Puritan opposition to immoral literature had widened to a popularly held view that all fiction not written for a specific moral purpose was perilous. Literature was capable of inspiring promiscuity, inappropriate ambitions, laziness, and attempts to undermine authority. Guardians of public morals had succeeded in establishing legal means for dealing with obscenity but apart from seditious intent, there was no concern with violence in the content of fiction.

Yet the roots of the type of fiction that would later be criticized for extreme and sensational violence were all present. The "Shilling Shockers" were the basis of the later detective mysteries of Poe, Bulwer, and Collins. Catnach's penny broadsides and chapbooks formed the basis of the "Penny Dreadfuls" that carried on the tradition of exploiting crime news. Finally, the stern diet that was thought appropriate for children contained as much violence as the later horror comics. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* with its vivid and grisly plates illustrating the torture and murder of saints, Grimm's *Fairy Tales* in which people often devoured their fellows, and many manuals of edification and admonition, prepared to frighten the child into "being good," were the basic reading materials for children.

## Chapter Three

# The Victorian Period: the Rise of Violent Literature

### The Victorian Preoccupation with Murder: The Background

The nineteenth century brought with it new attitudes toward the treatment of crime in fiction. Throughout the eighteenth century, religious sermons and tracts were inspired by current criminal activities to give solemn moralizing lessons of a criminal's awful fate at the gallows. Murder served the moralists by carrying a stern message to the ungodly. Like great fires, epidemics, lightning strikes, and terrible storms, murder was a visitation of evil and a warning from God. The theory of officialdom that seeing criminals executed would frighten all spectators from evil-doing complemented the moralists' attitudes. Each year in London executions could be witnessed at least eight times outside Newgate prison. Hangings drew huge crowds from all classes of society, and provided an excuse for a day of public festivity.

Newgate with its executions of notorious and petty criminals was an obtrusive theme in English life.

... the punishments meant to terrify evildoers frightened the innocent as well. Servants told tales of the gallows, parents used them to caution naughty children, and the boys themselves sought a delicious chill from accounts of horrifying murders. For many, all this was enjoyment, but some – sensitive beyond the ordinary – carried into manhood the memory of their fears.<sup>1</sup>

Samuel Romilly revealed his memories of such teachings and their effects upon him as a child:

The prints which I found in the lives of the martyrs and the Newgate Calendar, have cost me many sleepless nights. My dreams too were disturbed by the hideous images which haunted my imagination by day. I thought myself present at executions, murders, and scenes of blood; and I have often lain in bed agitated by my terrors, equally afraid of remaining awake in the dark, and of falling asleep to encounter the horrors of my dreams.<sup>2</sup>

The practice of moralizing upon criminal executions was part of a larger doctrine that held that a child was full of original sin at birth and his soul must be cleansed. Accordingly children were fed daily doses of religious teachings that placed a great emphasis on hellfire, punishments for sins, and early deathbeds, and

such admonitions often frightened children into nervous convulsions.<sup>3</sup>

Piety was not a mere Sunday garment; it was of the texture of the life of the folk. Nor was theology a mere system of abstruse theories; it was intimate and deeply personal and nobody could quite escape it.<sup>4</sup>

In this vein, a large proportion of the output of the early press was broadside versions or chapbooks of sermons, catechisms, and warnings to the ungodly. This tradition was continued in the numerous religious tracts that were distributed among the poor well into the nineteenth century. (Circulations of this type of material were more widespread in colonial America where the press came directly under the supervision of Puritans and Quakers.)

Ministers had sermons published in street-ballad form describing a "sulphurous picture of the hatefulness of an angry God" and the court scene of the Last Judgment of Revelations in vivid and terrifying detail. Rev. Wiggleworth's *Day of Doom*, first published in 1662 and selling 1,800 copies within the year, was one of the most popular of this genre.

Its presentation had an emotional drive, a vividness of imagery, and a compelling narrative movement all combined in great effectiveness. Here were verses far more sensational than the ballads about murders and hangings that were sold on the street, and Wiggleworth's influence over generations of New Englanders came largely from his shocking sensationalism.<sup>5</sup>

These publications were best sellers in America at the beginning of the eighteenth century and were equally popular in Britain.

Not until James Catnach and the "Penny Dreadfuls" after 1830 were crime and criminals sensationalized, made pleasurable, and disseminated in mass circulation doses to a newly literate public. Murder was exploited for pleasure and for its entertainment value.

There had been a few examples of the popular arts tending toward such a lighthearted treatment of violence during the eighteenth century. *The Beggar's Opera* of 1728 united humour with crime and punishment and stimulated considerable argument about the tone with which such subjects should be

treated. A clergyman, Martin Madan, was concerned about law enforcement and was duly agitated about the possible effects of *The Beggar's Opera*. He believed that the satire in *The Beggar's Opera*

... is quite lost upon the lower class people, and little of the piece may be supposed to remain on their minds, but the mischief of it ... it is hardly to be doubted, that many a wretched youth ... has been determined upon the most flagitious courses, from a noble ardour, which has been kindled in his imagination, to imitate the illustrious hero of the Beggar's Opera. ... How different a performance is the George Barnwell of Lillo ... its hero led forth to public ignominy and death - exhibiting a striking lesson to all beholders and an awful caution against the first solicitations of vice.<sup>6</sup>

Another such example would be Punch and Judy, which had an older stage history and larger and more varied audiences, principally composed of children, and was universally popular. Punch acts out representations of contemporary crimes and succeeds in hanging the hangman before he is to be executed.

Criminal deeds, trials, and executions always appeared in newspapers. Newgate and the gallows were popular topics regularly carried in "accidents and offences" columns. When some aspect of the crime induced particular excitement, generous space was allotted, and accounts became broadside ballad material, and the criminal's biography was included in one of the many Newgate Calendars.

The most popular of the Newgate Calendars was the five-volume *Malefactor's Bloody Register*, first appearing in 1773. Biographies of Claude Duval, Dick Turpin, and Jack Sheppard, notorious and universally popular eighteenth-century highwaymen were staples. Later popular writers like William Ainsworth were inspired by the characters described in these calendars but for the most part they were too expensive to come into the possession of the average person.

The Newgate theme was pervasive and inspired what came to be called the Newgate Novel, and also the "Penny Dreadfuls" and the early detective fiction known as the "Sensation Novel." These forms were extremely popular during the nineteenth century and created an interest in murder that was far out of proportion to its actual incidence.<sup>7</sup> The tendency of this crime fiction to evoke sympathy for the criminal and to educate readers in the methods of crime was the source of widespread criticism.

#### Legal Means of Censorship in Britain 1832-1900

After the Chartist uprising in 1848, revolutionary activity died down. Prosecutions for seditious and blasphemous libel became rare and with less certainty of success. The British people in the nineteenth century came to accept the view that no political opinion, however forcibly expressed, should be regarded as criminal unless violence, murder, or some other breach of law was advocated. Since 1861 it has been illegal by Statute to advocate an act of murder. This Act is

primarily a reaction to Chartist activities between 1839 and 1850, but also included anarchists and nihilists who were dedicated to subversion and violence, and who advocated the assassination of "tyrants" everywhere.<sup>8</sup> Convictions for obscene libel were more easily obtained and increased in number while those for seditious libel decreased.

Two views dominated discussions on press liberty. Absolute freedom of expression was advocated by some, while others advocated a political compromise, advocating freedom of all views except those that would incite men to violence. John Stuart Mill expressed the popular concern of many Victorians that if censorship by government authorities declined, censorship imposed by public opinion would fill the censorship vacuum. Informal censorship by public opinion's standards of good taste would become either ineffectual or tyrannical.<sup>9</sup>

In 1857 the *Obscene Publications Act* sponsored by Lord Campbell was passed, after much debate; it allowed control of the trade in pornography and indecent literature. The Act provided for search and seizure by police with warrants, and empowered magistrates to grant destruction orders for all publications thought to be pornographic.

Campbell explicitly stated the purpose of the Act was to check only those

works written for the single purpose of corrupting the morals of youth, and of a nature calculated to shock the common feelings of decency in any well regulated mind.<sup>10</sup>

The law was not to interfere with literature or the arts but only with the explicitly pornographic products of Hollywell Street.

Victorians, regarding literature as an educative agent capable of shaping an individual's personality and conduct, believed that books should be more than simply free from impurity; books should contribute to the moral improvement of their readers. Campbell's Act was extended to deal with all literature and not simply those of a pornographic nature as he had intended. All the "classics" were in danger of being labelled "obscene," including material from the Bible, Shakespeare, Rabelais, Boccaccio, the Restoration Dramatists, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, and Richardson to Zola and many others.<sup>11</sup>

The "Hicklin Judgment" ruled by Justice Alexander Cockburn in 1868 enshrined the literary and medical view of pornography into law.

The test of obscenity is whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort might fall.<sup>12</sup>

This ruling became the guide for English and American courts; according to this judgment a book could be ruled unlawful even if it only contained obscene passages and was not predominantly obscene. Further, literature must not vitiate the public morality, create

marked feelings, or lead to unlawful practices. These standards were translated into law only with regard to seditious violence and sexual immorality. The Customs Consolidation Act of 1853 prohibited the importation of obscene books and prints, and an Act of 1884 restricted indecent advertising and the mailing of obscene materials. Most of the prosecutions for "obscenity" were initiated by voluntary guardians of public morals, and attempts to check violence in fiction as a form of entertainment were left wholly to such organizations, and were essentially ignored by the government.

### Extent of the Reading Public

By 1830 there was a large potential reading public among the working class. Popular education movements had existed since the beginning of the eighteenth century, and Forester's Education Act of 1870 simply guaranteed that the reading public would continue to expand. Education was of crucial importance to philanthropists and religious groups who accepted John Locke's teaching that the child was born with a mind that was a "clean slate" (*tabula rasa*), and who therefore set out to impress the right ideas upon the child.

The Evangelical Movement from Robert Nelson in 1699 to Hannah More in 1833 set up hundreds of charity schools throughout England and Wales. By 1750 attendance in these schools had reached 30,000.<sup>13</sup> From the time of Wesley, Methodists provided a wide range of cheap literature for the poor. Robert Raikes and Thomas Stocks began to focus their attention on children who wandered about the streets on Sunday, and thus, began the Sunday School Movement. By 1830 between 800,000 and 1,500,000 children were attending Sunday Schools.<sup>14</sup> The Anglican National Society was founded in 1811 and the Foreign School Society was organized in 1813. By 1833 the former was teaching about 1,000,000 children and the latter 70,000.<sup>15</sup> The First Mechanics' Institute was founded in 1823 and similar organizations were formed to help provide poor adults with useful knowledge.

These organizations and societies were middle- and upper-class endeavours. In addition to providing schools, a sizable trade in religious tracts was aimed at saving the souls of the inferior classes. In the final analysis, religious tracts were not as successful in their attempts to inculcate wholesome, godly, and moral attitudes among the poor as their printers believed.<sup>16</sup> The poor often resented upper-class concern for their souls accompanied by neglect of such pressing needs as food, clothing, and sanitation. Although the tracts achieved huge circulations, most of them were probably used for lighting pipes, wrapping paper, and other unmentionable purposes.

John Wesley, the pioneer of tract literature, established a publishing house in 1745 for the printing of penny booklets. The Anglican Church followed with its creation of the Society for the Promotion of Christian

Knowledge in 1698 and its replacement, the Society for the Diffusion of Religious Knowledge in 1750. Hannah More and her Repository Tracts of 1794 were followed by the Religious Tract Society of 1799. All denominations eventually set up their own tract societies. By 1834 there were at least fifteen separate organizations distributing great quantities of religious tracts among the poor. The Religious Tract Society issued 14,339,197 different tracts in 1834 and this had increased to 18,223,955 in 1849.<sup>17</sup> With this circulation, the Religious Tract Society led all others.

Religious tracts tended to morbidity, dwelling on death, corruption, and heavy moralizing. Yet attempts to reach the lower-class audience by appealing to their tastes led to increasing sensationalism, comparable in many ways to the methods employed by Gothic novelists.

Religious tracts gradually disappeared and were succeeded by the "moral" penny press aimed, similarly, at counteracting the "Penny Dreadfuls" and the sensational press which were so popular among the working class after the 1830's.

### The Newgate Novel

The Newgate Novel extended over a period of about seventeen years, from just before the Reform Act of 1832 to the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1847. The Newgate Novel began as an instrument of protest against the severity of the criminal law and the structure of class privilege represented by that law. The writers of this genre, Ainsworth, Bulwer, and Dickens, proposed that crime was partly the creation of social injustice. However, these reform motives were accompanied by an exploitation of the general interest in crime and the criminal. Critics continually raised the question of whether writers should be socially responsible for the effects of their work. The Newgate Novel was quite often regarded as socially dangerous because it familiarized readers with vice and crime.

One of the earliest Newgate Novels was Edward Lytton Bulwer's *Paul Clifford*, published in 1830. Bulwer's purposes were twofold: "First, to draw attention to two errors in our penal institutions viz., a vicious Prison-discipline and a sanguinary Criminal Code," and second "to show that there is nothing essentially different between vulgar and fashionable vice – and that the slang of one circle is but an easy paraphrase of the cant of the other."<sup>18</sup> *Paul Clifford* was immediately popular. However, *Fraser's Magazine* objected to Bulwer's warped morality. "Its moral is reprehensible to even the extremest degree"; its hero, who deserved hanging, is "made happy in the end, as though he had been the most virtuous of mankind." According to *Fraser's* it was wrong to incite sympathy for criminals.<sup>19</sup>

Bulwer's next novel was the centre of much wider criticism. *Eugene Aram* had no purpose of social reform; its hero was an actual murderer. Bulwer tried to

bring Aram to life as the central figure of a romance and attempted a psychological character-study of an unusual criminal mind. Aram was made attractive in everything, except that he remained morally guilty. In developing the Aram story, Bulwer united the romance of Gothicism with the realistic factual tradition of the Newgate Calendars.

Aram was more popular than *Paul Clifford* had been. Again, *Fraser's* concluded

... we dislike altogether this awakening sympathy with interesting criminals, and wasting sensibilities on the scaffold and the gaol. It is a modern, a depraved, a corrupting taste.<sup>20</sup>

*Fraser's* believed that extraordinary crimes induced imitation and that a book like Bulwer's might have the same effect.

William Harrison Ainsworth's *Rockwood*, which appeared in 1834, also combined the Gothic tradition with the lore of the Newgate Calendar. The legendary highwayman, Dick Turpin, was made the central character. Turpin had no scruples against violence when it was necessary, but gallantry and honour were the sources of his pride. Ainsworth reworked the Turpin legend, adding new excitements, and his version of the legend became as well established as the old. Some criticized *Rockwood* for containing a low element and for its vulgarity, but few expressed the fear that it would lead young men to crime.

Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* reflected the prevalence of juvenile crime and the conditions of the contemporary underworld theme. It first appeared in January 1837 as a serial in *Bentley's Miscellany*. The book was published in three volumes in 1839. Both the serial and the book were extremely popular. *Oliver Twist* was classed among the Newgate Novels because of Dickens's fascination with crimes of violence and his sensational treatment of them. Dickens probes the psychology of the murderer, making the crime convincing and intimate.<sup>21</sup>

*The Edinburgh Review* praised Dickens's work. He

... never endeavours to mislead our sympathies – to pervert plain notions of right and wrong – to make vice interesting in our eyes – His vicious characters are just what experience shows the average to be – We find no monsters of unmitigated and redeemable villainy, no creatures blending with their crimes the most incongruous and romantic virtues.<sup>22</sup>

This was an obvious contrast to Bulwer's treatment of criminals.

Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* appeared in serial parts in *Bentley's Miscellany*, beginning in January 1839. *Jack Sheppard* was a petty thief whose life story had reached legendary proportions owing to his several ingenious escapes from prison. *Jack Sheppard* was widely criticized primarily because this novel put foremost the sexual element that Dickens carefully avoided. *Jack Sheppard* was issued as a three-volume novel, and sold 3,000 copies in the first week of publication in 1839.

Ainsworth's novel revived a popular legend, and a

"Jack Sheppard craze" followed, the effects of which were described by Thackeray.

I have not read this latter romance [*Jack Sheppard*] but one or two extracts are good: it is acted at four theatres, and they say that at the Cobourg [sic] people are waiting about the lobbies, selling Shepherd-bags – a bag containing a few pick-locks that is, a screw driver, and iron lever, one or two young gentlemen have already confessed how much they were indebted to *Jack Sheppard* who gave them ideas of pocket-picking and thieving they never would have had but for the play. Such facts must greatly delight an author who aims at popularity.<sup>23</sup>

Thackeray's criticism seemed to be validated when a valet named Courvoisier admitted that he had killed his master William Russell after getting the idea by reading *Jack Sheppard*.<sup>24</sup> Critics immediately re-examined the novel and concluded that it was a book that would create a lust for cruelty. *The Examiner* added:

... we acquit the author of having intended or foreseen the encouragement of cruelty, but the admiration of the criminal is the studied purpose of the book.<sup>25</sup>

One of the most vocal critics of the Newgate Novel was Thackeray. He insisted that virtue and vice must never be confused or mingled in the same character and vice must never be made interesting.

Bulwer defended his motives by arguing against the principle that one must never incite any sympathy or interest in the criminal. This attitude, he said, would do away with Othello and Macbeth. Further, he contended that even criminals have some good qualities and defended the realism of detail.

Debates between the merits and dangers of the Newgate Novel continued with eminent proponents on either side. However, the three-volume novel sold for at least 1½ guineas and was well out of the reach of the working class. When the Salisbury Square penny serials appeared in the 1830s criticism became much stronger.

### The Salisbury Square School of Fiction

Opponents of popular education seized upon the spread of crime and the great popularity of criminal news in the "Penny Dreadfuls" as evidence of "the deficiency of sound and religious education for the great mass of people most exposed to vicious influences."<sup>26</sup> Many believed that the masses had an innate resistance to the redeeming powers of education. Their prurient appetite for the news was thought to be never satisfied unless they were absolutely glutted with crime in print. Newspapers were condemned for being accessories to murder since "murder in print breeds more murder." It was also suggested that the "Penny Dreadfuls" accounts of crime catered to the naturally evil propensities and suggestibility of an uneducated mind. Such attitudes were widespread by 1840.<sup>27</sup>

Penny newspapers first appeared in 1832, and by 1840 there were eighty cheap periodicals circulating in London.<sup>28</sup> Many were innocuous, but crime and Newgate material were always popular. The proportion of crime and sensation increased in the later decades

and was always the staple of the Salisbury School of Fiction. Two men dominated the trade in "Penny Dreadfuls"; G. W. M. Reynolds and Edward Lloyd.

G. W. M. Reynolds was the most notorious, sensational, and popular of writers in the later nineteenth century. He deliberately exploited the market for all manner of sexual passion, torture, and pain, and described them in great detail. He included livid descriptions of torture and cruelty, full accounts of guillotining, and horrible descriptions of child beating, all of which were based on real incidents. Reynolds's most popular novels, *Faust*, *The Mysteries of the Inquisition*, *The Mysteries of London*, and *The Mysteries of the Court of London* appeared in serial parts in his penny weeklies. *Reynolds' Miscellany* was the most popular penny magazine of the period with a circulation ranging from 300,000 in 1845<sup>29</sup> to 450,000 per week in 1856.<sup>30</sup> Reynolds was a Chartist who combined extraordinary narrative with complicated action, crime, political radicalism, sadistic violence, and an emphasis on sex.

Most of the attacks against this type of popular literature were aimed specifically at Reynolds and his publications. After 1847 criticism and adverse public opinion from the middle and upper classes became so strong that it seems to have made Reynolds's style more conventional and less colourful.<sup>31</sup>

Edward Lloyd began publishing a number of cheap periodicals in 1841. *The People's Police Gazette* and *Penny Weekly Miscellany* were the most popular. The *Police Gazette* gave accounts of the most lurid crimes accompanied by detailed and horrible illustrations. The sensational quality of the illustrations may be imagined when it is noted that Lloyd demanded that in several "the eyes must be larger and there must be more blood – much more blood!"<sup>32</sup> The *Penny Weekly Miscellany* included crime and mystery novels in serial parts and descriptions of the exploits of notorious criminals and highwaymen. Details of vice and tortured victims were meant to startle and shock.

As Richard Altick has noted: "What Ainsworth brought to the drawing room audience, the hacks of Salisbury Square manufactured for the tenements."<sup>33</sup> Edward Lloyd incurred Dickens's wrath by supplying the penny market with imitations under the titles of "Oliver Twiss," "Nichelas Nicklebery," "Martin Guzzlewit" and the "Penny Pickwick." Dickens's plots could be recognized in these, but for the most part they were summaries stressing the most sensational aspects. After 1860, much of Lloyd's output was directed primarily toward juveniles and dealt in blood and thunder.

Many other penny publications were condemned as the foulest filth of all literary matter [in which] robbery was presented as merely a skillful sleight of hand, murder as nothing else but heroism, and seduction and prostitution as being anything but blameable.<sup>34</sup>

*The London Journal*, established in 1845, was the most

popular after the publications of Lloyd and Reynolds. It had reached a circulation of 200,000 by 1854,<sup>35</sup> concentrated among young men. *The London Journal* was

full of adventure of wild romantic stories depicting duels and battles, deeds of daring, hair breadth escapes by land or sea, the heroes being banditti, pirates, robbers and outlaws.<sup>36</sup>

These were the prototypes of the "Penny Dreadfuls." There were many imitators, but they circulated less widely. In reaction to these allegedly "immoral" and harmful publications a "Purified Penny Press" attempted to provide good fiction for the masses. Attempts to create an attractive but morally edifying competitor were widespread.

In his first issue of *The Penny Weekly Miscellany*, Lloyd claimed he would "maintain the highest majesty of virtue over the turbulence of vice." Reynolds insisted that a knowledge of vice was necessary if the path of virtue was to be followed. He also believed that virtue was always victorious over vice in his publications; but even though wrong-doing was ultimately punished, these authors made their criminals admirable and too successful.

In an attempt to counter the attraction to this sensationalist literature, other types of "penny literature" appeared. The Religious Tract Society's *Leisure Hour* (1852) was the most popular of all religious "purified" periodicals. It found ways to furnish excitement and diversion without violating moral principles, by dealing in "near truth" narratives, adventure, history, and exploration.

The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (1826-44) issued its *Penny Magazine* in 1832. The Society aimed to impart useful knowledge to the masses and inculcate in them positive values to prevent unrest and crime. *The Penny Magazine* reached a phenomenal circulation of 200,000 in its early years but declined to just 40,000 in 1844 when it was financially forced to cease publication.<sup>37</sup>

The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge established *The Saturday Magazine* in 1833 to awaken reason in the lower classes and lead them to "agreeable and innocent thoughts." *The Saturday Magazine* reached a weekly circulation of 80,000 in 1833 but had dropped to 20,000 in 1836 and ceased publication.<sup>38</sup>

From 1846 to 1856 numerous other religious and moral periodicals were established to purify the penny press. These emphasized domestic affection and loyalty to church and country, and attributed all sufferings of the poor to their own deficiency of positive virtues. They aimed at indoctrinating the poor with the virtues of thrift, temperance, punctuality, and religion.

*Household Words*, founded by Dickens in 1850, *John Cassell's Illustrated Family Paper* (1853), *Eliza Cook's Journal* (1849), and numerous others sought to counteract periodicals pandering to low and criminal tastes. All of this species, however, failed to provide uncritical support for the working class, and were

confined to practical and limited interpretations of the middle-class Christian ethic, and provided little excitement or diversion. Thus, the lower class remained faithful to the rousing "Penny Dreadfuls."

Attempts to arouse public opinion against the "Penny Dreadfuls" began in 1847 with severe and critical attacks published in the literary journals and the "purified penny press." The first really comprehensive attack giving details of offences and offenders was a series of three articles by Hepworth Dixon printed in *The Daily News* in 1847. The first article entitled "Literature of the Lower Orders" described the cheap penny press as vicious in its influence, and suggested that the staple ingredients of "theft, seduction, violence, adultery and murder" provided not only amusement but also instruction for the masses. Dixon's comments were not limited to cheap literature, however.

Their looseness, warmth of colouring in the criminal scenes, and of the false glow cast round guilty indulgencies, are their bane; but, unfortunately, these qualities are hardly sufficient to separate them from much of the literature of the day, which aspires to different rank, and proposed to itself a higher kind of audience.<sup>39</sup>

Dixon's articles initiated much popular discussion and comment in other periodicals. Reynolds and Lloyd, in particular, were mentioned and harshly criticized.

With cheap periodicals in the whole of England having a weekly circulation of almost three million,<sup>40</sup> and as critical comment increased, concern was reflected in parliamentary reports. The parliamentary report on Public Libraries in 1849 expressed some concern for the harmful consequences of cheap literature,<sup>41</sup> but this discussion became a central issue in the 1852 House of Commons inquiry into the situation of Criminal and Destitute Juveniles. This inquiry noted that an organized criminal class existed in London possessing many of its own institutions from the "flash house" which provided free temporary lodging, to the "Penny theatres" and singing rooms. Periodicals and theatres acquainted new entrants into the underworld with heroes of the trade. Willing teachers gave detailed accounts of criminal trials and crime reports. The readiness to imitate others was thought to be a familiar trait of the criminal.<sup>42</sup>

In 1850, there were a hundred different series of Jack Sheppard tales circulating in penny parts around London. Lower-class children also spent much of their time in penny theatres and singing rooms, singing ballads about, or watching dramatized versions of, the lives of notorious criminals.<sup>43</sup> These numerous sources of the details of criminal activity were thought to be harmful because they encouraged a desire to emulate favourite criminal heroes.

The Report of the Select Committee on Criminal and Destitute Juveniles noted the widespread influence of Dick Turpin and Jack Sheppard through the penny press and theatres. Large numbers of juvenile offenders were found to be familiar with these stories and many

confessed that they had been influenced by them in their criminal deeds. The report concluded that some boys were made worse by the admiration they acquired for such criminals through the penny theatres and penny press.<sup>44</sup>

Despite widespread criticism of cheap popular literature, no legal action was taken. The uproar began to die down by the mid-1850s, and some critics even began to defend the penny press. Defence was based primarily on the observation that the love of the marvellous, sensational, and exciting is universal and that it is impossible to refine a taste inherent in the human race. Another argument insisted that the way in which the poor were having their diversion provided wasn't very harmful after all, since the stories of the "Penny Dreadfuls" were not very much like real life, and thus the excitement produced would only be transitory. Discussions seemed to end on the note expressed in *The Saturday Review* that "in this sphere of literature it is the readers who determine the spirit of the publication, and not the publication which creates the taste of readers."<sup>45</sup>

### The Sensation Novel

J. H. S. Tompkins in his book *The Popular Novel in England* has noted:

The Sensational has always been present in popular literature . . . there is a universal taste for strong scenes . . . the desire to shock and be shocked is endemic in human nature and only the sophisticated feel it needs apology. Novel readers at the end of the 18th century relished an emotional orgy. . . . Critics complain through the whole period of the abuse of the marvellous in motive and incident . . . Rape, jealous frenzy and murder are the staple ingredients of these novels and the general method is cumulative. . . . Duels and abductions appeared most frequently and have their parallels in modern magazines and newspapers. . . . The Slaughterers innkeepers, corpse robbers, dungeons and ghosts are not new . . . terror is perennially fascinating to the human mind, we accumulate stock themes on which every generation draws to some extent. . . . The long period of sobriety preceding the late 18th century novels, revolutionary excitement, importation of Gothic material from Germany and the growing reading public all contributed to the sensation novel.<sup>46</sup>

Between 1860 and 1862, the three most popular novels of the late nineteenth century appeared. Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynne*, and Miss Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* were the beginning of a new species of fiction called the "sensation novel." The sensation novel of the 1860s and 1870s was a crime novel based on murder, bigamy, and arson. They are the immediate predecessors of the detective novel and are themselves direct descendants of the Newgate and Gothic novels. Mystery, horror, and melodrama are staples of sensation novelists such as Reade, Dickens, Collins, Braddon, and Wood. Plots are wildly improbable with free use of mistaken identity, a young woman's persecution, seduction by trickery, illegal incarceration, intense emotion, and a sense of fatality.

The sensation novel was extremely popular. Collins's *The Woman in White* created a fashion craze, was serialized in periodicals, plagiarized to some extent by half of the novelists in England, and adapted to the stage. It went through seven editions.

Compared to the Newgate Novel, the sensation novel did not provoke much indignation.<sup>47</sup> Adverse comment again criticized this species of fiction according to already familiar criteria. These novels were thought to be produced by and catered to unhealthy minds; they could sap an individual's moral strength and cause him to mistake reading for real life, hold vice up for admiration, and give evidence of a literary disease that was corrupting society.

Criticism was sharp and bitter and often satirical, but the "literary disease" had become an epidemic, judging from circulation figures. The introduction of cheap, one-volume novels at only six shillings, and the serialization of "sensation fiction" in penny periodicals added to the genre's epidemic proportions. The railway newsstand and circulating libraries provided the Victorian public with more "sensation novels" than any other type of literature during the period.

Satire and ridicule of the sort provided by *Punch* in May of 1862 formed a large proportion of critical comment. *Punch* announced in this edition that it would establish a *Sensation Times* devoted to

narrowing the Mind, making the Flesh Creep, Causing Hair to Stand on End, giving Shocks to the Nervous System, destroying the Conventional Moralities and generally unfitting the Public for the Prosaic avocations of Life.<sup>48</sup>

Upper-class Victorian morality still feared that invoking sympathy for criminals would lead to widespread criminal activity among the masses, and still believed that all literature should have a reformatory purpose. However, the three-volume novel and the circulating library, which had once allowed the policing of Victorian literature to be comparatively simple, had ceased to be the primary source of popular literature. The circulating libraries and, most notably, Mudie's Select Circulating Library, founded in 1842, were representative middle-class institutions which accurately reflected the tastes of the times:

... as tradesmen, their whole prosperity was bound up with keeping the three volume novel pure for their customers, and their relation to author, publisher, and reading public made it easy for them to dictate terms. When a book offended, it was entirely unnecessary to invoke the law . . . the libraries simply refused to stock it.<sup>49</sup>

All the circumstances of literary production and distribution conspired to give the circulating libraries an almost perfect means of censorship. The standard three-volume novel was only available to the reading public through the circulating library. Publishers did not sell directly to the reading public but only through circulating library proprietors, who, by virtue of the price of books, exercised a virtual monopoly.

The rise of mass-circulated penny newspapers that

serialized popular novels, and the rise of cheap novels in duodecimo size ended the circulating libraries' monopoly on moral censorship. In 1847 the Parlour Library began to publish single-volume novels at a cost of two shillings. This effort was so successful that Routledge's Railway Library was established to provide cheap reprints of popular novels. Between 1847 and 1860, the two series had printed 340 cheap novels, 19 of which were by Bulwer. Newgate and Sensation novels were staples.<sup>50</sup>

In 1848 W. H. Smith secured the right to sell books and newspapers at railway station stalls. The cheap novels that were made available were derisively termed "Yellow Backs." Although Smith purged the railway book stalls of much of the pornography that had been present, his "Yellow Backs" were primarily sensation novels with no pretence at self-improvement.<sup>51</sup>

The great fear of the upper classes that increasing literacy was the source of numerous evils, including the lowering of literary standards, the nurture of corrupt taste, and political and cultural revolution, whereby tastes would come to be set by the masses, had, in fact, been realized. Literature had become big business; it had been democratized. The trend continued as novels were produced even more cheaply. Condemnation by the upper classes could no longer impede the availability of popular literature.

## Chapter Four

# Popular Literature in America

The evolution of censorship in America followed the same lines as in Britain. The first printing press was established at Cambridge in 1638 and immediately all printing was placed under strict governmental supervision. Education and printing were equated with heresy and treason and the colonial government regarded the press as dangerous unless it could be kept under autocratic control by pre-censorship and by licensing its output.

The most popular form of literature in the U.S. in this early period was the cheap chapbook and broadside accessible to all. These were similar in content and form to those in Britain and continued to form the staple reading material of the majority well into the nineteenth century. British newspapers were imported into the colonies long before they were widely printed in America. Early colonial newspapers were modelled on British prototypes from which they procured stale but necessary European news.

Newspaper control in America first took the form of government licensing; the next stage saw newspapers become tools of political parties, and finally content was dictated by mass audience appeal. A similar trend has been noted in the evolution of the British press.

Books popular in the colonies were usually popular novels imported from Britain and made available through circulating libraries. By the nineteenth century the literary trade and influence between the two countries had become reciprocal rather than one-way.

Surprisingly, the possible harmful effects of violence in fiction were recognized earlier and more widely in America than in Britain. While Englishmen were concerned primarily with seditious implications of inciting violence, Americans accepted violence as a means to reform. The history of the American press is fraught with violence, not only in content but in extralegal attempts to control content of offensive or libellous comment. Censorship of the obscene preceded that of violence in America, as in Britain, but the Americans recognized an inherent bond between sex and violent death. Perhaps for these reasons, violence in fiction was the cause of wide public concern; this

concern was translated into legal means of censorship as early as the 1850s.

### American Newspapers 1690-1833

Newspapers did not appear in the colonies until the last decade of the seventeenth century. Content had to be approved by the governor before printing, and newsstands were licensed only if they contained no criticism of the authorities or insults toward government officials or of Puritan Theocracy. Most sold at twopence with a circulation of little over three hundred copies, and they tended to serve the wealthy merchant class at first. Illegal newspapers appeared despite the licensing laws and their printers were often severely prosecuted, usually by imprisonment. Illegal newspapers tended toward seditious content while the licensed press modelled itself after the *London Gazette* or *Spectator* and included poetry, social satire, and literary essays.

By January of 1765 there were twenty-three weekly newspapers in the colonies.<sup>1</sup> Emphasis was given to stale news of wars and politics from Europe while local news was neglected. These newspapers devoted much of their space to details of Indian depredations, criminal captures and trials, disasters, fires, monstrosities, piracy, storms and accidents.

Samuel Keimer opposed the frivolity and tone of the popular newspapers and published his *Universal Instructor in all Arts and Sciences: and Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1726 as an alternative. He believed that newspapers could spread rationalism and to this end he printed a cyclopaedia series from A to Z included in his paper. Unfortunately, it was not successful and ceased publication after a few years.

Most newspapers had achieved a circulation of at least 1,000 when the Stamp Act was imposed on colonial publications in 1765.<sup>2</sup> This Stamp Duty caused virtually unanimous resistance in the colonies and most newspapers were published on regular as opposed to stamped paper. Papers were full of accounts of mob action of burning tax collectors in effigy and destroying stamped paper.

The Stamp Act was repealed in 1767 and replaced with the Townshend Act which imposed a special tax on

tea, paper, wine, oil, glass, lead, and paint. Radical opposition in America continued, and newspapers played a major role in the American Revolution. Patriots burned Royalist editors in effigy and mobbed and destroyed their plants. Royalist editors were threatened and several were lynched. Patriot papers were headed by the "join or die" snake symbol and featured violent woodcuts by Paul Revere. An illustration by Revere appeared in the *Boston Gazette* adorning the story of the Boston "massacre" in 1770.<sup>3</sup> It portrayed four blocks shaped like coffins with a death's head and the initials of a victim scratched on each.

The content of newspapers was dominated by news of the revolutionary battles, but also included news of accidents, shipwrecks, fires, jail breaks, crime, and epidemics in large proportions. By the end of the war (1781) there were 35 newspapers with circulations averaging about 3,500. Subscription rates were commonly 12 shillings per year.<sup>4</sup>

There had been no means of legal censorship throughout the war. The liberty of the press was instead checked by mobs, threats of violence and organizations such as the Sons of Liberty. By this time, the taste for reading in America was largely fed by daily and weekly journalism. The newspaper entered about 40,000 homes and its circulation was extended by means of coffee houses and inns where a single copy could be passed on as often as thirty times.<sup>5</sup>

As in Britain, newspapers came under the control of the Congress between 1783 and 1833. There was no stamp duty in America but as party feelings grew, newspapers were founded as spokesmen for specific political parties. This partisan press incited much violence, and there was a long series of street encounters between editors of different political persuasions.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, Freedom of the Press had been guaranteed by the First Amendment in recognition of the importance of free speech as a vital factor in fomenting the struggle against Britain. Remedies for scurrilous attacks on character were thus dominated by physical attacks on the offending editors. Only the short-lived "gag law" of 1798 attempted to restrict the freedom of the press. The Sedition Act was an attempt to muzzle press criticism of the government during the war with France. Widespread opposition caused the Act to be abolished in 1800 as unconstitutional. By 1801 the "Dark Ages" of American journalism had arrived, characterized by scurrility, assault, corruption, and blatant attacks on personal character. Although the number of libel suits increased, assaults on, duels with, and mob violence against editors were the most popular remedies for offensive comments appearing in newspapers.

By 1833 there were 1,200 newspapers with an average circulation of 1,000 each. America had become the greatest newspaper-reading country in the world.<sup>7</sup> Average subscription rates ranged from eight to ten dollars per year for dailies. News of the French Revolu-

tion, national politics, outbreaks of violence, Indian wars in Florida, Napoleonic wars, domestic crime, and disasters dominated the news content.

The American press not only featured violent content but seemed to be a constant incentive to violence.

### The Penny Press in America 1833-1860

The spectacular phenomenon of the penny press occurred in America as it did in Britain. Although the purported aims of the Penny Press were to provide a realistic view, expose abuses, aid social amelioration, give emphasis to local and human-interest items, and replace partisan viewpoints with objective news, most built their circulation on sensational crime news. Widespread moral criticism was invoked and attempts to counteract the "Penny Dreadfuls" in America were primarily in the form of creating "moral" competitors.

The first successful attempt to establish a penny press in America came in 1833 with the establishment of Benjamin Day's *New York Sun*. This was the most sensational and popular of the penny periodicals, reaching a circulation of 5,000 daily after only four months.<sup>8</sup> The *Sun* emphasized local and human interest news, sensational events, crime news, and exploited police-court reports.

The *New York Transcript* (1834-1839) was the *Sun's* first rival in sensational journalism. Its emphasis was similarly on exaggerated and humorous court reporting, illicit sex relations, prizefights, and criminal trials. It never achieved the phenomenal circulation figures of the *Sun* but was quite popular. Penny papers like the *Transcript* and the *Sun* never gave justifications for their emphasis on crime news. The sensational was exploited because it was popular and boosted circulation.

Beginning in 1835, newspapers were established to protest the immorality of the *Sun* and its imitators and with the purported aim of educating the common people. Unlike the "purified press" movement in Britain, moral competitors in America also exploited crime news, but qualified their practice by insisting that their aim was to save souls by examples of "crime does not pay" rather than simply to make money.

James Gordon Bennett's *New York Herald* was the first of the "moral competitors," appearing in 1835. Despite Bennett's claim to saving souls, he was the major impetus in building up the Robinson-Jewett murder to a height of interest which no other American murder case had achieved in the past. Bennett was convinced of Robinson's innocence and even did some detective work on his own. During the trial, scarcely any other news was printed. The *New York Herald's* circulation tripled as a result of the concentration on this murder.<sup>9</sup>

Moral criticism against Bennett increased, led by committees of politicians, ministers, and men of social distinction in the ardent belief that respectable papers should not sink to the vulgarity of reporting sensational events, but that this type of material should be ignored.

Boycotts were organized by respectable citizens and editors which succeeded in forcing the *Herald's* circulation down to two-thirds of its original 30,000. "Vehicle of moral leprosy," "obscene vagabond," and "venomous reptile" were terms used to describe Bennett and his *Herald*. Bennett was forced by public opinion to tone down his paper and thereafter circulation began to rise again to 60,000 in 1860.<sup>10</sup>

Horace Greeley established the *New York Tribune* in 1841 as an instrument of moral war against the bad taste, coarseness, indecency, crime and sex emphasis, and questionable advertisements of the *Sun* and *Herald*. The *Tribune* was a bid to those who wanted a cheap but moral paper. Greeley declared his aversion to

... the immoral and degrading Police reports, advertisements and other matter which have been allowed to disgrace the columns of our leading papers.<sup>11</sup>

Greeley's opposition to sensational journalism was based on a belief that crime reporting incites more crime, and accusations that

... the damning guilt of making murderers rests on the souls of editors of papers who 'publish the loathsome details' of murder trials.<sup>12</sup>

Although the *Tribune* built its circulation on the elaborate reporting of the Colt murder case in 1842, the incident was described on a "higher ethical plane." The *Tribune* eventually gained the name of "The Great Moral Organ."<sup>13</sup>

The chief mechanism of control over the press remained that of "cudgel and horsewhip," duelling, and mob action against editors.<sup>14</sup> These means of censorship were inspired primarily by libellous comments on character printed by editors, or by difference in attitudes toward slavery. James Fenimore Cooper's verbal attacks against the press between 1837 and 1845 were based on a view that newspapers exercised a profoundly evil influence on society. The vast extent of libellous comment was his main concern and he initiated several suits against newspapers toward remedying the situation.<sup>15</sup>

While emphasis given to scandals and crime were severely censured by moralists in the long run, they were only counteracted by "purified" competitors. The ultimate alibi of the sensational journalist was "whatever the Divine Providence permitted to occur, I was not too proud to report."<sup>16</sup>

#### American Journalism 1860-1914

By 1890 there were 12,000 newspapers in the U.S. and circulations of popular newspapers reached at least 100,000 daily. The period between 1860 and 1872 had been dominated by news of the Civil War, but after 1872 the popular *New York Sun*, *Herald*, and *Tribune* continued sensational journalistic practices that had been established before 1860. Newspapers that were comparatively free of sensationalism like George

Jones's *New York Times* were considered old-fashioned and declined in influence and power.<sup>17</sup>

When Joseph Pulitzer bought the *New York World* in 1882, sensationalism in newspapers increased markedly following his example of a style termed the "New Journalism." By 1886, the *World* was the most popular newspaper in the United States with a circulation of 250,000.<sup>18</sup> Good-quality, serious reporting formed the base of the *World*, but this was spiced by unprecedented sensationalism. The *World* was the leader in gossip, crime reports, crusades, and news "stunts" combined with numerous illustrations. Diagrams of scenes of crimes, with X marking the spot where the body was found, detailed pictures of fires and street scenes were all common. Basically, the New Journalism formula was detailed news coverage, peppered with sensationalism, stunts, crusades, editorials of high character, illustration, promotional stunts, all in fourteen to sixteen pages, and for the cost of two cents.

Pulitzer justified his use of sensationalism on two grounds. First, he believed that people should know about crime and disasters if they were to combat them, because such things flourished in secrecy. Second, Pulitzer wanted to talk to the whole nation rather than to a select minority and therefore used sensationalism as an appeal.<sup>19</sup> Pulitzer's style was the prototype for most popular newspapers in the period before 1892.

Sunday newspapers also increased in number during this period. Pulitzer's Sunday edition of the *New York World*, called *Sunday World*, was the most popular with a circulation of 250,000 in 1887.<sup>20</sup> Five cents bought twenty pages of sensational news stories and serial fiction that was light and readable with numerous illustrations.

Illustrated monthly magazines also began to appear by 1885. *Harper's*, *Century* and *Scribner's* were the most popular the latter with a circulation of 200,000 in 1892.<sup>21</sup> Periodical fiction aimed at juveniles became popular. There were many "blood and thunder" boys' papers at cheap prices. As an example, *The Sterling Youth's Companion* (1827-1936) had reached a weekly circulation of half a million by 1892.<sup>22</sup> Comic Weeklies appeared for the first time in 1877. *Puck* (1877-1918) was bold, full of action, and merciless in satire.<sup>23</sup>

The *New York Journal* established in 1895 by William Randolph Hearst marked the beginning of an even more sensational style that came to be called "Yellow Journalism." The *Journal* was essentially modelled after the *World*, but by 1896 it had surpassed the *World* in circulation figures. Sex, crime, and sensationalism were maintained at a high level with detailed illustrations in all editions. Newspaper editors now involved themselves in the detective business, offering rewards for clues to the latest horrible crime.

A circulation war between the *Journal* and the *Herald* aroused such tremendous adverse sentiment toward the Spanish forces in Cuba that many historians seriously suggest that it may have caused the Spanish-American

War. Sensational stories of the sufferings of Cubans in concentration camps, complete with lurid illustrations of mutilated mothers, slaughtering of babies, executions, and filthy living conditions, were numerous. The *Journal* and the *World* competed in their attempts to provide the most atrocious news first and encouraged Congress to make a declaration.<sup>24</sup>

The "Yellow Journalism" formula was founded on crime news, scandal, gossip, sex, and disasters, and added to these the lavish use of pictures (a fairly new innovation), impostors, frauds, misleading headlines, faked stories, ostentatious sympathy with the underdog, and Sunday-supplement comics. Typical headlines from the *Sunday Journal* in 1895 were:

SNAKES ARE THEIR GODS

Cuban Disciples of the Devil have Hideous  
Midnight Orgies.

Alone in the Moonlight  
Savannahs they Disport  
Themselves like Fiends.

Beauteous Sinuous Mulatto Girls at  
the "Dance of the Adder" in the  
Witch Doctor's Village

Eating Snakes to Ward off Evil.<sup>25</sup>

ROMANCE OF A MURDER

An Opera Bouffe Assassination in Italy with a Real Corpse<sup>26</sup>

Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children faithfully read the "blood and thunder" Sunday features that were printed regularly in the *Journal*. The bizarre, horror, murder, and excitement were their watchwords. On December 29, 1895, the following crime story appeared spread over an entire page accompanied by pictures of the torture instruments:

FIENDISH PARENTS

Gruesome Torture Instruments  
Collected by Mr. Gerry's Society<sup>27</sup>

"Yellow Journalism" was severely criticized. In 1896 a reform movement began to end the *Journal* and the *World*. Preachers spoke out against them in sermons, clergymen held mass meetings to devise a plan of action, numerous clubs cancelled subscriptions, and librarians joined the boycott. The single unifying factor among all these groups was a belief that the exploitation of sex and crime was a public menace.<sup>28</sup> However, the boycott wasn't widely organized and had little effect. One incident serves to underline the nature of "yellow journalism" In 1901 Hearst printed an attack on President McKinley which concluded that, "If bad institutions and bad men can be got rid of only by killing them the killing must be done."<sup>29</sup> Shortly thereafter, McKinley was assassinated by a man who had a copy of the offending issue of the *Journal* in his pocket.

The *Journal* was subsequently boycotted by business organizations, libraries, social clubs, and newsstands. Hearst was hanged in effigy. President Roosevelt, in his first message to Congress, stated that McKinley's assassin had probably been inflamed by "...reckless

utterances of those who, on the stump or in the public press, appeal to dark and evil desires."<sup>30</sup> This incident contributed most significantly to the downfall of the "yellow" press.

The *New York Times* railed against "Yellow Journalism," and attempted to set an example by which the "yellow" press would lose prestige in comparison. The Boston *Christian Science Monitor* was established in 1908 to act as a protest against "Yellow Journalism." Its founder, Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, believed that crime and disaster news were unhealthful and developed a policy whereby crime stories were printed only when society was materially affected, or when a benevolent response was needed.

Finally, in 1911, an amendment to the Criminal Code made it a criminal offence to publish "matters of a character tending to incite arson, murder or assassination." The Postmaster General was given authority to deny the mails to papers containing this type of material.<sup>31</sup> After 1911, newspapers tended to follow the example of the *Times*, and emphasis was placed on quality and significant news and good editorials. Crime, court news, and scandals were certainly not ignored, but these were not sensationalized into full front-page spreads complete with lurid drawings and photographic illustrations.

#### American Journalism Since 1914

Newspapers had become "big business" by 1914. The decline and fall of the two largest New York dailies, the *World* and the *Sun*, marked the transition from personal propagandistic journalism to the conservative newspapers of businessmen. While the headlines of Joseph Pulitzer's *World* and Charles A. Dana's *Sun* continued their crusading, sensational, and at times, offensive style into the twentieth century,<sup>32</sup> both were abandoned under the dual pressures of consolidation and chain ownership led by Randolph W. Hearst, Frank A. Munsey, Robert F. Scripps, and Roy W. Howard, and of the growing popularity of the tabloids.

One of the most remarkable developments in early twentieth century journalism was the tabloid, and "jazz journalism."<sup>33</sup> The first American tabloid was Joseph Medill Patterson's *Daily News*, established in 1919. The *Daily News*, with its emphasis on pictorial presentation of crime-and-sex sensation, reached a circulation of one million by 1925, the highest of all existing dailies.<sup>34</sup> Its popularity inspired numerous competitors, the most popular of which were Hearst's *Daily Mirror* and Bernarr Macfadden's *Daily Graphic*, both established in 1922. F. L. Mott says of the tabloids: "The older yellow journalism seemed pale by the side of the saffron of the new 'tabs'."<sup>35</sup>

A series of sensational murders and scandals between 1922 and 1929 initiated a "War of Gutter Journalism" in which the leading tabloids tried to outdo each other in coverage. Three incidents stand out. The first was the murder of a preacher by the name of Hall and a choir

singer, Mrs. Mills. The police, having no clues, closed the case. When the *Mirror* found a witness, the case was re-opened and a total of 200 reporters covered the trial. The defendant was found "not guilty" and he promptly sued the *Daily Graphic* for its sensational treatment of the testimonies.<sup>36</sup> Later, in 1928, when Ruth Snyder was executed for the murder of her husband, a *Daily News* reporter-photographer with a camera secretly attached to his ankle provided the front page picture of the electrocution.<sup>37</sup> Numerous scandals containing much that was obscene were picked up by the tabloids. The "Daddy" Brown and "Peaches" scandal was covered in such an objectionable fashion by the *Daily Graphic* that The Society for the Suppression of Vice took its editors to court on charges of obscenity.<sup>38</sup>

Beginning in 1925, the regular eight-column newspapers and educational and church agencies led a campaign against the excesses of the tabloids. The result was that the *Daily News* was forced by public outcry to clean up its pages and offer more wholesome types of circulation builders. Both the *Graphic* and the *Mirror* disappeared. The tabloids that remained did not deal in sensationalism, invasion of privacy, and picture faking but in "non-salacious" reporting, taking advantage of the convenient half-page size and the traditions of a heavy emphasis on pictures and a condensed and lively style.

The first American code of journalism ethics was prepared and adopted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors at its first annual meeting in 1923. The Code continues in its original form today as a censure against sensational techniques of the "yellow" and tabloid journalists and against imposed restrictions of the press. Section VII, labelled "Decency," is of particular interest.

## VII

**DECENCY.** A newspaper cannot escape conviction of insincerity if while professing high moral purpose it supplies incentives to base conduct, such as are to be found in details of crime and vice, publication of which is not demonstrably for the general good. Lacking authority to enforce its canons, the journalism here represented can but express the hope that deliberate pandering [sic] to vicious instincts will encounter effective public disapproval or yield to the influence of a preponderant profession condemnation.<sup>39</sup>

F. L. Mott, in his extensive history of American journalism, notes that the great stories receiving the most attention in the press for any period usually "relate to wars, presidential elections, great disasters, uncommonly dramatic or sensational crimes and popular and 'built up' sports events,"<sup>40</sup> yet, as the twentieth century progressed, treatment of these favourite topics became less sensational. In reaction to the "objectionable" tabloids, the *Chicago Times* was established in 1929 by Samuel Emory Thorneason. The *Times*, soon the most popular tabloid, was devoted to abjuring sensationalism in its lively but terse and fair news reporting.<sup>41</sup> Its popularity was proof that a

balance between commercialism and professionalism was becoming the expected ideal in journalism. For this reason, the public outcry against the tabloids was the last major opposition to newspaper content.

Freedom of the press from government infringement is a deeply embedded concept in American society. There have been few threats of government censorship of the press in this century. Censorship of the American press during the two World Wars was accepted with little opposition by the American press. Despite these censorship laws, the American people were the most extensively and promptly informed by an "army" of foreign correspondents.<sup>42</sup>

During World War I, the Espionage Act and the Sedition Act formed the basis of censorship laws. The Espionage Act of June 15, 1917, forbade the use of mails and provided heavy fines of imprisonment for anyone who "shall wilfully cause or attempt to cause . . . disloyalty . . . or shall wilfully obstruct recruiting."<sup>43</sup> The Sedition Act of May 16, 1918, amended the Espionage Act to include "any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government of the United States or the Constitution, military or naval forces, flag, or the uniform of the army or navy of the United States" in addition to any statements "intended" to bring these things "into contempt, scorn, contumely, or disrepute."<sup>44</sup> Unlike their Canadian counterparts, these World War I censorship laws were effective and applied to more than seventy-five newspapers.<sup>45</sup>

A few days after the U.S. declaration of war, on December 19, 1941, the United States Office of Censorship was created to censor all communications entering and leaving the United States for the duration of World War II.<sup>46</sup> In addition, a voluntary system of censorship without legal sanctions was set up which worked very effectively to suppress news dealing with shipping, planes, troops, fortifications, armaments, and weather conditions.<sup>47</sup> Despite rigorous censorship provisions, the Second World War was heavily covered, the American public receiving graphic details of battles in addition to interviews with wounded and shell-shocked soldiers.

In the U.S., as in Canada, it is primarily the libel laws which perform as the only means of press control during peace time. Although State legislation has attempted to infringe upon the freedom of the press at times, the United States Supreme Court has upheld press freedom and considered libel laws adequate protection of the citizen against possible abuse by the press.<sup>48</sup>

Although there have been numerous strictures against American newspapers, specifically concerned with excessive violence in their pages, there have been no major protests since the 1930s. Although the treatment of violence may be less sensational and, therefore, receiving less attention, violence, in its many forms, still comprises a significant percentage of newspaper reports.

Terry Ann Knopf analyzed the press coverage of the Chicago shoot-out between police and a group of blacks on July 23, 1968, and other incidents of racial violence during July and August of that year, and compared them to the facts gathered from those involved.<sup>49</sup> As a result, she suggested that sensationalism in the press has not been totally abandoned. She concluded:

Unfortunately, inaccurate and sensational headlines created an impression of widespread sniping, with the police singled out as the principal targets. A few individual acts of violence were so enlarged to convey to the reader a series of 'bloodbaths.' In some cases, an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the injuries was buried in the news story. In other cases, no explanation was given. In still other cases, the number of casualties was exaggerated. Distorted headlines were found in the local press.<sup>50</sup>

Knopf's study indicates that, in fact, most of the uprisings were precipitated by prior tensions and not planned by "snipers" attached to militant Black organizations. Further, there were fewer shots fired and fewer casualties than the press recorded.

Today, newspapers tend to be local in orientation. However, a study conducted between 1948 and 1950 by James Davis revealed no consistent relationship between the amount of crime news in newspapers and local crime rates. Further, his study revealed that public opinion reflects the trends in the amount of crime news reported rather than in actual crime rates.<sup>51</sup> Apparently, crime and violence are still big sellers for newspapers.

This theme is picked up by Herbert A. Otto in a 1961-62 study of the amount of crime and sex in the content of newsstand magazines, newspapers, and paperbacks.<sup>52</sup> Otto found that men's magazines, such as *Playboy*, had the largest number of pictures depicting themes of sex and violence combined with an average of 4,157 words devoted to violence and a heavy emphasis on physical torture and rape. Police and detective magazines, such as *True Detective* and *True Police*, had an average of thirty murders and seven robberies per issue, led the field in descriptions of incidents of rape and physical torture, and had an average of 6,199 words devoted to violence. Romance magazines, such as *Real Confessions* and *True Love*, ranked third in detail descriptions of physical torture and second in descriptions of rape. Family magazines, such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Redbook* and *Reader's Digest*, devoted only 926 words to physical violence but led in their emphasis on verbal attack using abusive violent language.

For newspapers, Otto found a surprisingly low total amount of space devoted to descriptions of violent incidents. War violence was the highest followed by accidental violence and then by murder and physical violence. While most newspapers were found to devote between two and three per cent of their total content to violence, the *Detroit News* was as high as 8.8 per cent and the tabloid, the *New York Daily News*, was the highest with 33.5 per cent of total content devoted to violence.

Otto found approximately 50 per cent of cheap paperbacks fell within seductive-sadistic-violence classifications.

Although little attention is given to excessive violence and sex in the popular print media today, and the predominant belief is that the treatment of these themes is decreasing, Otto concludes:

Most magazines available on the corner newsstand are riddled with a metastasis of sex and violence themes . . . [and] there are definite indications of a significant increase in the quantity of violence and sex themes found on the newsstands over the last ten years . . . With the exception of the tabloids, newspapers are not as preoccupied with these themes as the other media.<sup>53</sup>

Since the 1930s, attention focusing on the prevalence of sex and violence in the media of communications has been displaced, with few exceptions (comic books), to motion pictures and television, while newspapers, magazines, and pocketbooks have been neglected, apparently without justification.<sup>54</sup>

### American Fiction: The Conflict Between Social Unity and Individualism

D. B. Davis, in his book *Homicide in American Fiction, 1798-1860*, noted that:

... if we could formulate a generalized image of America in the eyes of foreign peoples from the eighteenth century to the present, it would surely include, among other things, a phantasmasgoria of violence, from the original Revolution and Indian wars to the sordid history of lynching; from the casual killings of the cowboy and bandit to the machine-gun murders of racketeers. America . . . where it is estimated that a new murder occurs every forty-five minutes, has also glorified personal whim and impulse and has ranked hardened killers with the greatest of folk heroes. Founded and preserved by acts of aggression, characterized by a continuing tradition of self-righteous violence against suspected subversion and by a vigorous sense of personal freedom, usually involving the widespread possession of firearms, the United States has evidenced a unique tolerance of homicide.<sup>55</sup>

The relationship between American violent social reality and violence in fiction has been widely debated in the United States in recent years. While Henry Irving Dodge in 1921 asserted that "... the public grown used to 'strong medicine' in fact, must have even stronger medicine in fiction,"<sup>56</sup> literary critic, Kenneth Lynn, in a study prepared for the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (1968-69) pleads for a re-examination of literary violence.<sup>57</sup> Lynn suggests violence in literature is a literary tool like many other fictional conventions used to comment upon and interpret the existing social environment. Lynn heaps criticism upon the social scientists who extrapolate violent incidents out of context to create false impressions about the extent and nature of violence in American literature. Literary violence, according to Lynn, must be studied in its context because:

... mitigating dreams of peace . . . are threaded through the very bloodiest of our novels and stories, [and] . . . comic juxtap-

positions . . . take the curse off many of the most unpleasant episodes that the American imagination has ever recorded.<sup>58</sup>

Lynn also opposes "messianic" literary critics such as D. H. Lawrence and Leslie Fiedler who indict American society on the basis of their judgment that violence is the dominant and ever-increasing theme in American literature. Asserting that it is fallacious to assume that literature is an exact mirror of life, Lynn examines a representative sample of outbursts of violence in literature and concludes that although there are similarities in life and literature, the American novel is more extreme in many ways than reality and provides more insight into the state of the author's mind than into American society.

At times, however, the distinction between fictional violence and reports of actual violence disappears. Henry Irving Dodge reveals an excellent example of the blurring of fiction and fact in the *New York Times*, January 30, 1921:

The public cares for the story more than for the news. Suppose the papers should give but the bare facts of a crime, undecorated or "played up" by the skillful dramatists of the editorial staffs. Public interest would be small. Why do you ask, do we devote thousands of dollars worth of space – column after column – to the literal report of a single trial? Simply because there is nothing more dramatic than words uttered on the witness stand. They most always have a portentous bearing and so thoroughly does the editor appreciate this that he always sends his best men to report big cases and often employs famous fiction writers to play up local colour and scenic effect.<sup>59</sup>

Just as newspapers turned to writers of fiction to spice up factual accounts, writers of fiction have often turned to factual material for the basis of their novels. Truman Capote made the transition from fiction to fact to produce the popular *In Cold Blood*. Capote moved to Kansas, where he lived for three years, to interview Perry Smith and Richard Hickock, murderers of the Clutter family, friends, and neighbours of the victims, to produce a vivid portrait of the killers. While many believed that *In Cold Blood* was a plea for the abolition of capital punishment, Capote denies the allegation by saying, "if the boys hadn't been executed, then I wouldn't have had an effective ending for the book."<sup>60</sup>

D. B. Davis concurs with Lynn in the belief that violence in literature is not proof of an excessively violent society. Davis' thesis is that literary violence reflects, but does not mirror, historical conditions, tensions and social patterns.<sup>61</sup> Rather than studying specific examples as Lynn does, Davis traces a general pattern of violence in American literature from its beginnings to the present and concludes:

Critics who interpret violence in contemporary literature as a symptom of a sick society may be reassured to know that American writers have always been preoccupied with murder, rape, and deadly combat. Yet, in so far as the older themes (revolution, civil war and violence as something to be either suppressed and disciplined or at least applied to rational ends) have been assimilated to an antirationalist philosophy

[violence is a "creative" force, as the "very quintessence of reality"], and the individualistic hero [of the frontier] has been moved from the open seas or prairies to a dense society [urban America] in which only the most brutal survive, the treatment of violence has grown increasingly ominous for a people who profess to believe in peace and human brotherhood.<sup>62</sup>

Davis suggests that the Western hero, first created by James Fenimore Cooper in the character of Deerslayer (Hawkeye), was the result of a conflict between opposing American ideals of the omnipotent individualist and of social unity. By inaugurating the great tradition of the Western, the conflict between aggressive self-reliance and self-sacrificing unity was evaded. The individualist on the frontier could be regarded as a constructive rather than destructive force, taming the west and creating his own laws. In the struggle for survival, the western hero proved himself through acts of violence.

As the frontiers disappeared, an antirationalist treatment of violence began to dominate American fiction. The Western gave way to the detective novel, a tradition inaugurated by Edgar Allan Poe, displaying a fascination with and almost a celebration of the passions, fears, and motivations of man's irrationality. The rise in popularity of the Newgate Novel in Britain to replace the Gothic novel is likewise the result of the transition to an antirationalist treatment of violence and crime.

The first attacks on the popularity of murder in fiction in America came in 1807 from the novelist Charles Brockden Brown. He believed that, "like all departures from nature and common sense," crime and violence in fiction "will have but a short reign."<sup>63</sup> Brown himself, more than any other early American novelist, had contributed to the fictional study of murder and the psychology of the criminal. Brown believed that violence was a substitute for suppressed desires and was sanctioned only by perverted conscience or insanity.

Despite Brown's wishes, the 1830s and 1840s brought a flood of English novels in the Newgate tradition that evoked sympathy for the criminal as the product of his environment. In these novels criminals were always portrayed as victims of brutal slums and circumstances.

Edgar Allan Poe, the founder of the "Detective Novel," was, like Dickens, Ainsworth and Bulwer before him, fascinated with murders and criminal psychology.<sup>64</sup> Poe adopted earlier pirate and highway robbery accounts that had been popular and made crime in fiction respectable by disguising violence as justice.<sup>65</sup> However, in Poe's work the criminal is no longer the hero. Rather, the hero is the detective superman who is permitted to take justice into his own hands. "We are meant to project ourselves into the character of the hero avenger" and "the reader becomes the lynch, seeking blood and death and lynching of the murderer."<sup>66</sup>

From the sentimental romance of the 1790s to the "yellow back" novel of 1850, the theme that seduction means death is constantly repeated. However, in

American fiction sexual error and violent murder became parts of one inexorable process. The fear of sexual corruption in America increased to such a degree that certain offences were omitted from a liberal criminal code. Edward Livingston in *A System of Penal Law, for the State of Louisiana* (Philadelphia, 1833) reasoned:

... as every crime must be defined, the details of such a definition would inflict a lasting wound on the morals of the people. Your criminal code is no longer to be the study of a select few... it is particularly desirable, that it should become a branch of early education for our youth. The shock which such a chapter must give to their pudicity, the familiarity their minds must acquire with the most disgusting images, would... be most injurious in its effects.<sup>67</sup>

Livingston's conception of a crime too horrible for punishment is unique in jurisprudence. Most fictional accounts of murder during the nineteenth century involved sexual conflict. However, literary descriptions were devoted more to detail and realism of sudden death than to that of sexual violations. The link between the two was thoroughly accepted but was never explained.<sup>68</sup>

The association between sex and death became more complex in the strange American nineteenth-century obsession with corpses. Instead of a casual relationship, sexual sin meant death, and killing meant sexual possession.<sup>69</sup> Perhaps humorous treatment of corpses releases some of the tension of this connection between death and sex. But, for whatever reason,

... death in picturesque, horrible, or exaggerated forms was a source of laughter. Bodies of the lynched, the murdered, and the grotesquely killed are stock devices.<sup>70</sup>

The sensational sex murder of Helen Jewett in 1836 was tremendously popular and seemed to reinforce the connection between sexual sin and horrible murder. Helen Jewett, a young prostitute, was murdered with an axe at a "Palace of Passions" in New York. The criminal then set fire to the bed, hoping to conceal his crime. The *New York Herald's* coverage of the Jewett murder included a vivid description of the appearance of the corpse. The *Herald's* circulation tripled within a week of this sensational story.<sup>71</sup> Holt Ingram's novel of 1843 provided a fictional explication of this well-known murder. Several other accounts, fictional and narrative, were inspired.

Poe also identified sexual love with death, be it physical, moral, or spiritual. This theme, fully developed in American fiction, was not completely new. It has roots in the Gothic novel, particularly in Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk*, which in turn was deeply influenced by de Sade.

In August of 1835, *Nile's Register* lamented that "many of the people of the United States are 'out of joint,' a spirit of riot or a disposition to 'take the law into their own hands' prevails in every quarter."<sup>72</sup> Numerous periodicals expressed concern that America faced a violence crisis. Duelling continued throughout

America until the late eighteenth century, except in the South where it remained part of the Southern code of honour until about 1830. Mob lynchings continued long after duelling had disappeared, and well into the twentieth century. However,

Even after western gunmen had surrendered their sawed-off shotguns and six-shooters, Americans continued to glorify the memory of grim-faced duelists, who drew blood when a remark was made without a smile, who walked stiff-legged toward each other at high noon, their gloved hands poised above the curving handles of revolvers in oiled holsters.<sup>73</sup>

Most fictional accounts of violence reflected the law of revenge – inherent in duelling and lynching customs. Moralists condemned novels as the "nerve and arm of the Duellist and the Murderer." The criminal's actions could always be explained by circumstances by novelists seeking to discover motives for aggression.

By 1850, writers of fiction condemned duelling and mob lynching practices. Many believed, as George Lippard repeatedly suggested, that executions arouse the public's taste for blood and subsequently increase the incidence of crimes.<sup>74</sup> Public executions were intended to rid spectators of evil impulses but novelists contended that they actually aroused aggressive passions and served as vicarious outlets for murderous desires.<sup>75</sup>

Edward Lytton Bulwer's *Paul Clifford* had a profound influence on popular American literature. William Gilmore Simms in America took up the theme that the criminal was a victim of circumstances and that the injustices of society were actually responsible for crime. *Guy Rivers* (1834) by Simms describes a criminal with a marked appetite for violence and destruction.

The United States had its criminal calendar too. In 1833 Henry St. Clair compiled the *United States Criminal Calendar: or, An Awful Warning to the Youth of America*. It was largely inspired by the murder of Solomon Sharp, speaker of the Kentucky House of Commons, by Jereboam O. Beauchamp. Beauchamp was executed, while nearly dead from self-inflicted knife wounds, before a huge crowd of spectators. St. Clair, like other moralists of his time, believed that sensational crimes were meant to be exploited only for their reformatory persuasion.

Simms's novel, *Guy Rivers*, was also based on the exploits of an actual criminal. It was very similar to the Newgate Novel in treatment, but Simms believed that the moral of the story was that human nature involves a desire for excitement, violence, and destruction, and that parents should control such passions in children through careful guidance.<sup>76</sup>

The relationship between violence in literature and violence in reality has been a central concern of literary critics since the beginnings of American fiction. The earlier direction of concern was from literary violence to violence in actuality, suggesting the possibility that a work of fiction is capable of inciting the reader to acts of violence (a common view in the eighteenth,

nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries). More recently, the query has been offered whether or not a violent literary tradition reflects a violent American society. It seems that while violence in literature remains a constant, and many criticisms recur, new interpretations of its value and functions emerge in justification.

The detective novel is a good example of this phenomenon. From its origin with Poe, through the Spillane thrillers, to Ellery Queen and Agatha Christie, the detective novel has been dependent upon a plot of crime and violence. All have to some extent been accused of pandering to the public taste for sex and sadism, providing blueprints for criminal activity, and generally for being of adverse moral influence.<sup>77</sup> Yet Poe was defended for breaking the tradition of criminal as hero; though he probed the psychology of the criminal, he did not portray him as heroic. Spillane is the culmination of violence on the side of justice and, while many critics condemn Spillane's "sickening" graphic descriptions of violence, quoting passages similar to the ones which follow, others refer to the hero, Mike Hammer, as the "saviour" of society. The narrator in both passages is the "good" character, as opposed to the criminals in the story. From *The Big Kill*:

The little guy stared too long. He should have been watching my face. I snapped the side of the rod across his jaw and laid the flesh open to the bone. He dropped the sap and staggered into the big boy with a scream starting to come up out of his throat only to get it cut off in the middle as I pounded his teeth back into his mouth with the end of the barrel. The big guy tried to shove him out of the way. He got so mad he came right at me with his head down and I took my own damn time about kicking him in the face. He smashed into the door and lay there bubbling. So I kicked him again and he stopped bubbling. I pulled the knucks off his hand then went over and picked up the sap. The punk was vomiting on the floor, trying to claw his way under the sink. For laughs I gave him a taste of his own sap on the back of his hand and felt the bones go into splinters. He wasn't going to be using any tools for a long time.

The victim of the next assault has been described as having "a middle-aged, sensitive Latin face." After this man has given the hero certain information, the hero blames him for the deaths of victims of the Mafia. He answers:

'I know them! From Europe I know them and who am I to speak against them. You do not understand what they do to people. You . . . ' My knuckles cracked across his jaw so hard he went back over the arm of a chair and spilled in a heap on the floor. He lay there with his eyes wide open, and the spit dribbling out of his open mouth started to turn pink. He was the bug caught in the web trying to hide from the spider and he backed into the hornet's nest.<sup>78</sup>

Jerry Palmer, literary critic and cultural historian, cites quite different passages from those above to illustrate that it is not the violence of the hero, Mike Hammer, that is sickening, but that of his opponents. Palmer builds an elaborate theory which suggests that Mike

Hammer is the "saviour" of society rather than its menace:

The dramatic function of this violence is, it would seem, to exhilarate the reader; involved with the hero, one is intended to enjoy with him the suppression of the evil men against whom he pits himself . . . the reader's sensibility is so affected by the white heat of hatred that he may well assume that a person who can be so single-minded in his hatred of something (evil) cannot but be pure in his motivation, and if Spillane can make his reader accept the purity of the hero's motivation, he has half succeeded in making him accept the justifiability of his actions. . . . Hammer's world . . . a world which is super-ordinate to the ordinary world, for it is the invisible battlefield in the midst of society, where the fate of that society is fought out: the hero confronts a gigantic plot — Mafia, Soviet spy ring, etc. — and eventually destroys it, thus becoming the saviour of society, the preserver of the American way of life. . . . This society which the hero is trying to save is just the one which is creating a way of life which is incompatible with his ideas of how life should be lived and societies should be run (the well-known conflict between the ideology of free enterprise and the restrictions demanded by the rationalized liberal state). It is only by existing on the fringes of society and by being its saviour that the hero can affirm both his individuality and his social ability.<sup>79</sup>

The numerous fans of the modern detective novels of Ellery Queen, Agatha Christie, Edgar Wallace, and others, including noted heads of state,<sup>80</sup> and the authors themselves, defend the genre as being merely puzzles, divorced from the reality of murder and providing otherwise bored readers with excitement and the challenge of a new game, not with cathartic tension release.<sup>81</sup>

### The Pulps

Publications which came to be known collectively as the "pulps" started to emerge in the 1840s and continued to the 1930s when they were largely abandoned for new forms of entertainment such as comic books and radio.

The family "story paper" was the first of the "pulps" to evolve, beginning in 1841 with a publication entitled *Uncle Sam*. The questionable novels of G. W. M. Reynolds and Eugene Sue in serialized format comprised the largest part of its content. *Uncle Sam* was criticized for printing stories which

. . . had too much of *The London Journal's* seduction-and-suicide flavour, or even worse, the seduced was rewarded by ultimate marriage.<sup>82</sup>

Further, this publication was railed against for accepting "questionable" advertising for abortions, patent medicines, and books on venereal disease. Although it was very successful for a time, criticism of the "family" story paper mounted, circulation dropped, and *Uncle Sam* ceased publication.

Shortly thereafter, in 1848, Fred Gleason of Boston established *The Flag of the Free*. *The Flag* contained many serialized novels of Joseph Holt Ingraham, an author associated with cheap, trashy literature called "yellow backs."<sup>83</sup> While claiming a high moral tone, this

publication was devoted entirely to entertainment by way of sensational news, adventure and love stories, and a few moral sketches. By 1849 *The Flag's* circulation was 40,000. "The Black Avenger of the Spanish Main or the Fiend of Blood" and "The Red Revenger" are typical story titles, highly suggestive of content. Also included regularly were the gory tales of Mrs. Ann Stephens, describing Indian atrocities on the American frontier.<sup>84</sup>

Other popular story paper weeklies of the early period include Justin Jones's *Star Spangled Banner* (1844) of "murderous design with dressy soldiers flourishing their swords as they rode into battle";<sup>85</sup> *The Union Jack* which was devoted to land and sea battles, piracy and whaling; and *The True Flag* (1855) which filled its huge front page with sensational stories and always contained at least one murder.

Of later family story papers, *The New York Ledger*, established by Robert Bonner in 1858, was the most successful. Mrs. Southworth, an extremely popular author of fiction, was hired to write its feature serial stories, always accompanied by an illustration of a murder or a death that was sure to be included in every weekly number. *The Ledger's* circulation soon outdistanced every other newspaper and periodical in the U.S. with a circulation of 400,000 in 1860. This success inspired numerous imitations in the sixties.<sup>86</sup>

Cheap paperback nickel and dime novels flourished between 1860 and 1885. These novels were condensed versions of larger works and came by way of popular serials in illustrated story weeklies. Stories appeared in such papers as *The Fireside Companion* (1872), *The Family Paper* (1870) and *The New York Weekly* (1859). If they were popular in this form, the whole series would be published in a two-dollar reprint and then finally made available for mass distribution in condensed dime-novel format.

Beginning in 1855, Street and Smith Publishers were the first to produce dime novels. One of their most popular publications was the clean-cut detective Nick Carter, who continually found himself in violent situations. Carter first appeared in Street and Smith's story paper *The New York Weekly* in a story by John Russell Coryell entitled "The Old Detective's Pupil." Street and Smith decided to capitalize on the character's enormous popularity and commissioned Frederick Van Rensselaer Dey to write a series of dime novels to form the *Nick Carter Library*.<sup>87</sup>

In 1860, Irwin P. Beadle and Co. made cheap novels even cheaper and began to publish juvenile novels at a nickel. After 1860 most of the new story papers to enter the field were just one product of larger businesses which published dime novels, cheap reprints, boys' papers, girls' papers, and family story papers. This type of literature reached its peak of popularity in the seventies. While the family story papers and dime novels declined after 1880, juvenile papers and nickel novels continued to be popular until 1892.

Story papers and cheap novels, with their widest audience among the young, claimed adherence to high moral standards. The vices of tobacco smoking, blasphemy, gambling, drinking, and suicide were attacked. Heroes were regularly required to refuse a cigarette or a drink as an example to young readers. However, the villain was given liberty to use slang, smoke, drink, and kill. Moral greyness was absent from this literature. A simple opposition between good and evil was presented with virtue always victorious. There were no compromises.

Popular characters among boys' story papers were Ned Buntline's "merciless Ben the Hairlifter" who "never spares a redskin but kills and scalps all whom he can meet or trail,"<sup>88</sup> and Buffalo Bill, described by Mary Noel as

... the perfect stuffed shirt of the story-paper wilderness. He never drank. In Ingraham's stories he never smoked, in Buntline's only occasionally and with apologies. In Ingraham's stories he never left off a "g" at the end of an "ing" word. He never swore or uttered a word of slang. In Buntline's a few liberties of speech were allowed him, but even in moments of unrestrained anger Buffalo Bill was conscious of his audience. This was his manner of speaking:

'Can the memory of my good father, butchered in cold blood before his poor wife and helpless children, ever pass away? No, Bill, never, never! I will never feel that he rested easy in his grave while one of them is alive to boast of the dark deed he has done. I have with my own hand killed two-thirds of them and until all are gone — and by my hand, too, I will not feel content. I heard the wretch groaning from pain this morning. It was music to my soul. Oh, how I wanted to whisper in his ear, 'Fiend, the pursuer is at hand! Your time is drawing near; the spirit of the murdered hovers near to exult over your tortured end!' Bill, I could glory in every pain that reached his frame. I could see his eyeballs start in agony from his head — the beaded sweat, blood-colored, ooze from his clammy skin — each nerve and tendon quivering like the strings of a harp struck by a maniac hand. Oh how I could glory over his howling misery! And it is coming, it is coming — his time. When it does, mercy need not plead to me — not a throe, not a pulsation would I spare for the wealth of all the world!'<sup>89</sup>

Story papers were ridiculed, criticized, or ignored by the more sophisticated newspapers. Novels and papers aimed primarily at a juvenile audience were most severely criticized.<sup>90</sup> Numerous juvenile misdemeanours such as running away from school were attributed to reading this material. The *New York Tribune* attacked dime novels for leading boys astray and a member of the New York assembly introduced a bill to prohibit the sale of any fictional material to juveniles under 16 years of age without parental consent.<sup>91</sup>

Not until 1946 was the full-length, unabridged novel produced at comparatively cheap prices. Mickey Spillane novels, the successor to the dime novel, could be purchased for twenty-five cents. Succeeding the juvenile story papers were the comic books, appearing first, just prior to World War I, at a cost of ten cents.

Although violence in fiction had inspired widespread and severe criticism by the nineteenth century, it was

the gradual availability of such fiction to the common people at cheap prices that invoked the most severe attacks. Concomitant with the emergence of the pulps was the founding of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, and the resulting "Comstock laws" which instituted legal means of censoring violence in fiction. The Parent Teacher Association, founded in 1897, also displayed militant pressure against the pulps. From this climax, however, those censorship laws which did exist have been annulled.<sup>92</sup>

### Comstockery in America

Anthony Comstock was the 'guardian of the moral purity of youth' in America. For more than forty years Comstock stood watch at what he called the 'sewer mouth' of society, alert and expert at identifying obscenity and aggressive in arresting it.<sup>93</sup>

Anthony Comstock was born in 1844 and raised in rural Connecticut then the most religiously orthodox and socially conservative part of the United States. As a private in a Connecticut regiment during the Civil War, he spent most of his time fighting to reform the morals of his comrades. Following the War, Comstock became a New York dry goods clerk but persisted in his visions of "moral heroism" and in his determination to make the police enforce Sunday-closing, anti-obscenity, and other laws that were often disregarded. Comstock's first exploit came on March 3, 1872, when he presented obscene books and pictures to the police and reported the vendor who was then arrested. Between 1872 and his death in 1915, Comstock was responsible for the arrest of more than 3,600 men, women, and children on moral grounds, not always restricted to obscenity.

Comstock believed that he was divinely commissioned to his post of "moral guardian" and that it was doubly blessed, being both assigned by God and being in the service of protecting children. His enemies were legion and included the "free thinkers" such as D. M. Bennett, Robert Ingersoll, and Ezra Heywood.

However, he also had the support of numerous respectable citizens who believed that he embodied the "moral sense" of the era. Many cartoons ridiculed him, but most editorial writers found reasons to justify his actions. It was Comstock's own arbitrary definitions of "immorality" and "obscenity" that were accepted in the courts of law and enforced by Comstock's strong-armed methods.

Comstock's conviction was that a "single book or a single picture may taint forever the soul of the person who reads it."<sup>94</sup> Evil reading, according to Comstock, encompassed nearly all light fiction and popular journalism; from the story papers to dime and half-dime novels. Both of Comstock's books, *Frauds Exposed* and *Traps for the Young*, resembled the half-dime novels that he deplored both in "blood and thunder" style and in appearance. Containing detailed information on all forbidden adventures, they are addressed to parents as warnings. Villains are described as Satan's agents and

Comstock is always the hero, coming to the rescue of the innocent.

Comstock founded the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice in 1872, and in 1873 he lobbied for amendment of the Post Office Act. Section 148 of this Act dealt with the offence of sending obscene material through the mails, and Comstock successfully pressed for a longer list of material qualifying as offensive, and for more severe penalties. This new version, amended according to his wishes, became known as the Comstock Law.<sup>95</sup>

Unlike the Society for the Suppression of Vice and its successor, the National Vigilance Association (1886), in Britain, Comstock did not limit his activities to the suppression of the sexually obscene. He believed that the stories in the dime novels and story papers were the sole cause of juvenile delinquency. Comstock disregarded all possible social or psychological explanations, and in every case of delinquency mentioned, with great diligence he traced the deed back to popular juvenile literature. He believed all delinquents were "school boys crazed by the accursed blood and thunder story papers"<sup>96</sup> and set out to eradicate their harmful influences.

In the mid-1880s Comstock successfully prosecuted book dealers for selling criminal story papers and stories of bloodshed and crime. The Society for the Suppression of Vice's Sixth Annual report deals in great length with the so-called "Boys Papers" which are attributed with making hardened criminals out of children, educating them in crime and filling the courts with "baby felons."<sup>97</sup>

#### The Report observed:

Repeated instances have occurred within the last few years where boys have become brigands, and have banded themselves together with an oath of secrecy, to plunder and pillage, having a rendezvous in some cave, or deserted house, or some underground saloon.<sup>98</sup>

and resolved that:

What the law does not reach, under the present administration, we have sought to reach and crush, by creating public sentiment against law breakers. Several of these vile papers have been stopped within the past year, and are no longer published. As a result, the Canadians have sent a solemn protest to our Post Office Department against sending the vile *Police Gazette* through the mails, across their lines. Western cities are legislating in their councils against it and will not permit it to be sold in their limits.<sup>99</sup>

The Society's efforts to mobilize popular opinion were vigorous. Public meetings were organized throughout the United States and in Canada. Public addresses on "Evil Reading, a source of Vice and Crime" were widespread. Out of these efforts, numerous states passed laws to control the criminal story papers, the *Police Gazette*, and similar publications that tended to incite criminal behaviour.

This vigorous control over the products of the press diminished after Comstock's death but the Society for

the Suppression of Vice, aided by laws prohibiting the exploitation of crime in publications, secured further convictions. As of 1948 however, the U.S. Supreme Court negated the “bloodshed” law that prohibited “papers discriminately made up of reports of crime, police reports, lust, etc.” Thus, there were no longer any legal means to prevent crime and violent sensationalism. Since the Society for the Suppression of Vice there have been no widespread attempts to control this type of material backed by determined volunteer guardians of the public morality.<sup>100</sup>

Canada has never had laws restricting violent content in popular literature. However, the Canadian Customs Act of 1907 broadly prohibited the importation of “immoral,” “indecent,” “treasonable,” or “seditious” material, and a list of prohibited publications was compiled.<sup>101</sup> Many of those listed are American periodicals such as *Illustrated Police News*, *Police Gazette*, *The Police News* and others that are probably prohibited for “obscene” content. The list does not indicate which adjective applies to each publication or which section was considered objectionable. Since 1907 the prohibition has been lifted for most of those in the list. Essentially, the Customs Act, by its control over the importation of books, was the main source of censorship in Canada.

## Chapter Five

# A Brief History Of Canadian Publications

The Canadian press, originating just over two hundred years ago, inherited journalistic traditions from both Britain and the United States, and in many respects mirrors the evolution toward press freedom south of the border. Three significant factors, however, serve to distinguish Canadian press history from that of the United States. First, the introduction of the printing press into Canada trailed more than one hundred years behind its introduction south of the border; second, the tone of Canadian journalism has been generally more practical, moralistic, and subdued, and less sensational than southern counterparts; and third, Canadian colonial governors tended in many cases to encourage the establishment of printing presses rather than outlaw or discourage them in the early years of printing. As to whether there has been more or less censorship of the press in Canada, there is considerable divergence of opinion. The divergence appears to be a function of whether the historian considers Canadian press history as a whole,<sup>1</sup> or, like W. H. Kesterton, the most notable among the very few historians devoting attention to the Canadian press, divides Canadian press history into stages each marked by a differing degree of press freedom.<sup>2</sup>

Printing began in Eastern Canada in 1752, and just one hundred years ago in the West and North. Printing made slow progress across Canada owing to the lack of transportation and communication routes required for the shipment of supplies and the collection of news. Until the later years of the eighteenth century there was no internal postal service, and when first established it was restricted to the Atlantic seaboard settlements. Further, settlements were small with few subscribers to support a newspaper. All these factors conspired to make printing a risky venture in Canada, and thus many of the first newspapers were shortlived.

Government patronage was almost a prerequisite of continued business and success. The printer became, in essence, the official King's Printer with contracts to print laws, proclamations, public notices, and speeches in addition to a small salary. At the same time, the King's Printer could do job-printing, issue a newspaper and issue any other products from his press. For

numerous early newspapers, withdrawal of government contracts meant financial ruin and therefore provided the colonial government with a convenient and expedient, yet indirect, means of censorship. The case of Canada's first newspaper is a good example of indirect government control of the press.

The first Canadian press was established in Halifax in 1751 by two New Englanders, Bartholomew Green and John Bushell. From this press the first number of the *Halifax Gazette* was issued on March 23, 1752.<sup>3</sup> The *Gazette*, a weekly, half-page, printed in two columns on both sides, was continued after 1761 with government patronage by Anthony Henry. Henry disapproved of the Stamp Act of 1765 and issued some numbers of the *Gazette* with "black rules and mourning borders, or such devices as skull and cross-bones"<sup>4</sup> instead of the required stamp to express his opposition. The government withdrew its subsidy and gave it to Henry's newly established rival, and *The Gazette* ceased publication.

More direct means of government censorship were also exercised. John Ryan and William Lewis, who established *The Royal St. John's Gazette* and *Nova Scotia Intelligencer* in 1783, were arrested and received stiff fines for printing criticisms of the provincial and municipal governments.<sup>5</sup> John Howe, publisher of the *Halifax Journal* beginning in 1780, son of the famous American, Joseph Howe, and later to become Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, successfully defended himself against libel charges for condemning the police and magistrates in his paper.<sup>6</sup> Fleury Mesplet, the first Montreal printer, was the only other publisher on record in this period to be jailed for printing material critical of colonial government. Mesplet was sent by Benjamin Franklin in 1775 to Montreal to print propaganda designed to persuade the inhabitants of Lower Canada to join the United States. When Mesplet arrived, American troops were withdrawing and, lacking finances to return home, the French printer remained in Montreal. Before 1777 most of Mesplet's printing consisted of religious tracts, devotionals, religious emblems and other material for the church. However, Mesplet printed an account by M. Saint Luc

de la Corne of the author's shipwreck off Cape Breton in 1761. Although this particular publication had wide appeal, it was apparently exceptional in content for this period.

...such contemporary accounts of adventure are extremely rare among early Canadian imprints. One looks in vain for tales of Indian captivity or narratives relating the exploits of fur traders. Such narratives, if written, never found their way into print.<sup>7</sup>

Mesplet established his *Gazette du Commerce et Littéraire* on June 3, 1778. It is described as "inoffensively dull and respectable," including essays, anecdotes, correspondence, verse, and advertisements. Valentin Jautard, the editor, began including attacks on local judges which Governor Haldimand reacted to by requiring all copy to be submitted to an official censor prior to publication for the duration of the American War. Jautard persisted in his attacks on the administration of justice in the absence of the censor, and subsequently Mesplet and Jautard were jailed in 1779. Escaping from prison in 1782, Mesplet returned to Montreal, leased back his confiscated press, and started *The Montreal Gazette: Gazette de Montréal* along the same lines as the former *Gazette du Commerce et Littéraire*. *The Montreal Gazette*, though changing hands many times, continues to this day.

Canadian historian H. P. Gundy suggests that these cases of government censorship of the early Canadian press were the exception and not the rule. The Canadian press succeeded in performing a twofold function of publicizing government decisions and expressing public opinion. Gundy explains that Governor Haldimand's censorship of *La Gazette du Commerce et Littéraire* and silencing of Mesplet and Jautard were necessary only for security reasons during wartime. Gundy describes the earliest Canadian printers as

...honest, law-abiding and patriotic, and if, at times, they appear to us to have been moralistic and hortatory, they were genuinely concerned to raise the intellectual and cultural level of the colonial and pioneer society which they served.<sup>8</sup>

More typical of the relationship between printer and colonial government officials, Gundy suggests, are Louis Roy's *Upper Canada Gazette or American Oracle* (1793-1794), Stephen Miles's *Kingston Gazette* (1810-1818) and William Brown and Thomas Gilmore's *Quebec Gazette* (1764-1789). Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe, considering "a printer . . . indispensably necessary"<sup>9</sup> for Upper Canada persuaded Roy to set up the first press in Upper Canada at Newark. Roy resigned after only a year and was succeeded by similar government printers first in Newark and then in York, the new capital. In addition to legislative acts, speeches and proclamations, all printers published a newspaper to act as an instrument of public opinion. Miles's *Kingston Gazette* was published independently of government support and contract. The *Gazette*, like most Canadian papers of the period, contained adver-

tising, stale European news, extracts from American papers, government notices, familiar essays, correspondence and some local news. Unlike the American press, news of naval and land battles of the War of 1812 were inconspicuously displayed on the inside pages. Brown and Gilmore's *Quebec Gazette*, the second newspaper to be published in Canada, soon became a quasi-governmental organ by receiving salaries and printing contracts. However, this did not preclude the expression of anti-government sentiment in the pages of the *Gazette* and Brown himself denies ever being subject to censorship.<sup>10</sup> Government and public service were successfully separated. For example, Brown and Gilmore printed The Quebec Act for the government in 1774 while the pages of the *Gazette* expressed the widespread English dissatisfaction with the leniency of the Act.

In the first issue of the *Quebec Gazette*, Brown and Gilmore wrote:

Our intentions to please the Whole, without offence to any individual, will be better evinced by our practice than by writing volumes on this subject. This one thing we beg to be believed that PARTY PREJUDICE or PRIVATE SCANDAL, will never find a place in this PAPER.<sup>11</sup>

In Canada, the first printing done in any community was usually a broadside-style news sheet, with multi-page newspapers, pamphlets, and books coming later. News publications concentrated for the most part on providing information on the arrival of boats from England or Boston, the availability of supplies, and government decisions. Devoted to the practical, these publications rarely included the fictional or the sensational. Gundy's description of the products of the early Canadian press is apt,

No gems of literature issued from the early press. In pioneer times there was scant leisure for cultivating the literary graces. The products of the press served a practical purpose – tracts for religious and educational use, legal compendia for officers of the law, government releases for public information, anti-government propaganda for the malcontents, almanacs for the common man. For recreational reading there was little but sermons on the one hand, accounts of public executions on the other.<sup>12</sup>

The early press was limited by its inability to procure news which would make its issues attractive and interesting. *The Upper Canada Gazette*, like many of its contemporaries, depended upon New York papers for British and foreign news and ignored local news.

The whipping or branding of a criminal, according to the custom of those days, would be mentioned, but the public meetings, although duly announced, received no attention, and there was no discussion of public movements.<sup>13</sup>

While Gundy asserts that the Canadian press has always been "free," W. H. Kesterton, in a more comprehensive study of Canadian journalism, finds an evolution in both the struggle for, and the actualization of, the "freedom of the press" in Canada. Kesterton distinguishes four periods in this evolution, each with

characteristic patterns of ownership, control, and organization of the press.

In the first stage, 1752 to 1807, the press is a branch of the government for the most part and indirect censorship by government officials is widespread. Unlike the pioneer press in the United States, licensing of the press was not utilized as the means of control. Subservience of the Canadian pioneer press was ensured by a colonial government which held the financial reins and therefore dictated the success or ruin of each printer. The pioneer news sheets of the eastern provinces are described by Kesterton as:

pallid, neutral, harmless sheet[s] without any vital role in the social and political life of the community.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, from 1752 to 1807, the Canadian press was innocuous, accepting its subservient role under the authoritarian colonial government and avoiding comment on figures of authority and politics.

As the population and literacy increased, the press gained its independence, relying upon advertising and subscription fees rather than government patronage. Government censorship became dependent upon the levying of fines and the dispensing of jail sentences. Yet, by the mid-nineteenth century, even this indirect means of censorship had been abandoned.

The second stage of the press, delineated by Kesterton as occupying the years from 1807 to 1858, was dominated by the entrepreneurial editor, independent of government and outspoken in political issues.<sup>15</sup> The colonial government persisted in its attempts to control the press by means of jailings and stiff fines but as the press waged its war for responsible government and won, the major obstacles to press freedom were overcome in the process.

The paradox of nineteenth-century journalism was that the government attempted to censor libel against its officials and policies, but was blind to the licentious treatment by the press of individuals outside the government.<sup>16</sup> Codes of ethics developed by the industry in later periods finally corrected the problems caused by the proliferation of newspapers used as personal weapons of their editors. Kesterton describes the nineteenth-century editor as "guilty of circumlocutions, discursiveness, sometimes pretentiousness and vituperative attacks on political opponents." While the press was winning freedom from government censorship, the political partisanship of the editor determined what was fit to print.

While politics certainly dominated the newspapers from 1807 to 1858, this was by no means the extent of their content. A report of the Canadian Press Association is illuminating in this regard in an examination of the *Toronto Globe*'s content:

It is a mistake to suppose the *Globe* owed its pre-eminence to its politics. It was due to its excellence as a purveyor of news. It recorded everything of public interest and did so promptly. There was a trial of a physician at Cobourg for murder. A reporter was sent who telegraphed his notes, which meant

heavy cost. In collecting news the *Globe* far outdistanced the two other papers, [the *Colonist* and *Leader*], and even people who did not like its politics read it first.<sup>17</sup>

The first Canadian magazines inherited the pioneer newspaper penchant for serious and "uplift" material that Gundy noted but, translated into fiction, this formula failed. The magazine field in Canada during the nineteenth century was severely limited in sharp contrast to United States magazine publications. The majority of Canadian magazines were very serious ventures, solemn and intent upon meeting the literary needs of the nation. Most of these publications were short-lived. Subscribers rarely paid their fees and competition from British and U.S. magazines steadily increased. Most of the Canadian magazines were literary monthlies containing poetry, history, politics, and fiction primarily by native Canadian writers. Some of these were established expressly to combat the importation of "light literature" from the United States such as *Barker's Canadian Magazine*, established in 1846 only to cease publication the following year.<sup>18</sup>

By the later years of the nineteenth century, Canadian journalism had divorced itself from the necessity of moral purpose. Canadian journalist Frederic Robson saluted this trend but was discouraged by the emerging theme in Canadian journalism which he described:

Newspapers are probably doing more good now through an intelligent supervision of news matter, from a knowledge of what the people want, than by preaching morality in every item of the police report. . . . The 'metropolitan idea' is emerging so that the news of the day is given without additional moral deductions. . . . In every town and village of Canada may be found two papers of opposing political views, and during elections the talk of their space and brains is taken up with stories of the enemy, which the writers well know are the output of misjudgment and childish nagging.<sup>19</sup>

Like its counterpart in the United States, the Canadian press of this period was a political tool in many cases; however, unlike the U.S. press, sensationalism was not exploited to a great extent. Robson describes Canadian journalism as the opposite of American "yellow journalism." Canadians merely recite the "bald fact" or catalogue events "that show humanity going off at a violent tangent." Robson does not favour "canary-coloured journalism" for Canada but urges that attention be given to impressionism and human interest, "—stuff that pulsates."<sup>20</sup>

The third period in the evolution of the Canadian press (1858-1900) was characterized by the increase in strength and number of the Eastern press, and the pioneering of the press in the Western and Northern parts of Canada. The press moved west with the settlers attracted by the 1852 Pacific Gold Rush, the Homestead Act (1872), the building of the CPR in the 1880s and the 1897-1905 Yukon Gold Rush. Meanwhile, in Eastern Canada, the daily newspaper began to increase in importance and in number in

response to more favourable postal rates, a growing literate population, and increased profits.

Most newspapers retained the flavour of violent political partisanship characteristic of the earlier period. Frequently interspersed with "objective" news reporting, libel was heaped upon political opponents and careless libel that would be in "contempt of court" today took the form of subjective comments upon the facts of a case before the courts. A typical account of a murder is found in the *Yarmouth Tribune* of August 25, 1875, which read:

A fearful murder was committed here last night. David Robbins, fifty five years of age, shot his wife, Emmeline Chute, beat out her brains with a mallet, set fire to her bed and fled to the woods. The community is in a great state of excitement. An officer, with a posse of men, went in pursuit today.

The murder was evidently premeditated. . . . He has been ill-treating his wife for a long time. He was not given to drink but was an innate fiend.<sup>21</sup>

Lack of competition among newspapers in the earlier periods yielded an innocuous press, its issues dull in appearance. Increased competition and technical innovations from 1858 to 1900 spurred the production of better-looking papers. With the invention of the cross-ruled screen in 1886, an efficient method of photo-production was discovered to replace wood engraving and chalk plate methods.<sup>22</sup> However, the new process was not widely adopted until well after 1900 because of a strong prejudice against pictures as sensational devices.<sup>23</sup>

The first journalism organization, the Canadian Press Association, was established in Kingston, Ontario, in 1859. The Association was "Canadian" in name only; until the second decade of the twentieth century it remained principally an Ontario organization. William Gillespy, editor-owner of the *Hamilton Spectator*, was elected the first president. The CPA led a movement to abolish postage on newspapers, agitated for improvements in libel laws, fought newspaper combines, and paid considerable attention to elevating the tone of the Canadian press and improving the ethics of handling patent-medicine advertising.

Advertising of questionable products under deceptive guises proliferated during the nineteenth century. Potentially harmful drugs were extolled, devices for procuring abortion were offered for sale, and extravagant sales pitches were frequent. The CPA launched a campaign against this type of advertising in the early years of the twentieth century and succeeded in eliminating the worst offences. At the 1911 annual meeting an appeal was made to the publishers of Canada to eliminate "fake fraudulent and offensive" advertising from their pages.<sup>24</sup> The advertising manager of Burroughs Adding Machine Co. in Detroit claimed such advertising had a serious, detrimental effect upon subscribers' attitudes toward the newspaper carrying it. E. St. Elmo Lewis declared:

The fact is that the patent medicine advertiser, the graft mining

advertiser and the faker generally is the shrewdest buyer of space. He tries to get into the most influential publications because he knows they have more to sell than the paper that has no influence.<sup>25</sup>

At the 1912 annual meeting, the CPA prepared a set of guidelines to aid publishers in editing advertising copy to which all members assented. The CPA's standards for censoring advertising went beyond the list prohibited under the Criminal Code of Canada and suggested a further list of objectionable and undesirable advertising which should not be accepted. Advertising was again a major source of concern at the CPA's 1913 annual meeting where James Schermerhorn, publisher of the *Detroit Times*, presented an address entitled, "Who makes fraudulent advertising effective?" Schermerhorn believed that the developing of the CPA's advertising code and other moves by the industry signalled an end to a "cycle of excessive commercialism" and continued:

The challenge of the present day to the aspiring and resourceful is not to make a great fortune but to get it without stain. That the publication of indecent and deceptive advertising is unworthy of a noble profession is no longer debatable. Who makes advertising deception effective? Who but the publisher. Let me assure you that a daily newspaper launched and developed along the line of ethical policy I have been discussing is both possible and workable. Also that it is quite as simple to determine without delay whether an advertisement is desirable as it is to ascertain whether the advertiser's credit is good or whether a piece of news is an offence against a citizen's good name.<sup>26</sup>

During the last years of the nineteenth century, Canadian libel laws were revised. The Criminal Code of Canada of 1892 repealed the 1865 Libel Act to furnish the core of present criminal law provisions. In addition, each of the provinces passed legislation to deal with newspapers and libel within their borders. Ontario passed its Libel Act in 1882; it was revised in 1897, and is now incorporated in the Revised Statutes of 1970. The new statutes provided a higher degree of certainty within the industry and contributed significantly to increasing responsibility of the press to its public.<sup>27</sup>

Characteristic of the fourth press period were concerns of excessive commercialism and press partisanship. Kesterton notes that changes in the press during the twentieth century were qualitative rather than quantitative. It was the period of centralization and consolidation leading to the development of the one newspaper town. Today there are fewer newspapers than existed in 1903, and since the Davey Committee Report Canadians have become aware of the dangers inherent in the phenomenon of press centralization. Yet Kesterton notes that a reduction in the number of newspapers has actually contributed to qualitative improvement of those that have survived.

An accidental benefit to a situation lacking the cut throat competition of local daily against local daily is that it discourages the practice of sensationalizing the news in order to gain readers. The frantic "beat" and meretricious "scoop"

have become far less frequent now that the single newspaper city has become commonplace.

The result has been to make journalism more responsible.<sup>28</sup> However, reduction of sensationalism was not entirely by chance. The CPA denounced the “yellow journalism” predominant in the United States in the early years of the twentieth century and its members were expected to refrain from such “irresponsible” practices. Press partisanship and commercialism received considerable attention at the Association’s annual meetings. In 1910, Colonel Watterson, editor of the *Courier Journal* of Louisville, Kentucky, and “the last great personal editor on the American continent” addressed the CPA. Watterson noted a transition from personal to impersonal journalism and expressed the prevailing hope that sensationalism would be abandoned under the new circumstances.

The old order of personal journalism, with its ideas of individual responsibility, often mere egotism and vanity, has passed away. The new order of impersonal journalism, with its ideas of commercial honour and of public obligation, has not quite adjusted itself as yet to its enlarged habitation and richer apparel.

We hear a deal about yellow journalism. It is much like the pot calling the kettle black. Offences against decency are more or less relative and qualified. More and more will newspaper owners and makers discover that integrity and cleanliness pay the best dividends. The scandalmonger will in time be relegated to the category of the unprosperous as well as the disreputable and the detective be driven out of the newspaper service, where he should have no place, to the company of the police where he alone belongs.

The rationale of the day’s doings rendered with good sense and in good faith by a self-respecting, conscientious writer, will always command attention and be worth its space; and as this is done with power or charm will it rank in drawing and selling with the news features. Success may be obtained without it, but not distinction and influence.<sup>29</sup>

Two years later, at the 1912 annual meeting, John R. Bone, president-elect of the *Toronto Daily Star*, attempted to deal with some of the criticisms levelled at the Canadian newspapers. Bone regarded the charges of press sensationalism in Canada to be ill-founded unless there was something “inherently evil about black type” itself. Very little that could be classified as “untruthful” and “indecent” sensationalism could be found in Canada, Bone asserted. However, the Canadian press was guilty to some extent of inaccuracy which tended to undermine public confidence and was “almost as dangerous as deliberate faking” of news. Bone also considered press partisanship a serious problem emerging within the newspaper industry:

There is here, of course, a serious danger, a danger that is greater now than ever before on account of the increased capital required to finance a newspaper. It is a serious consideration because I think it is axiomatic that no newspaper can rise higher than its proprietor, and the salvation of our press depends on its control remaining in the hands of high-minded, public-spirited citizens. . . . No newspaper can have any lasting

influence unless it is permeated with absolute sincerity. It is easier for a newspaper to lead a double life than it is for an individual.<sup>30</sup>

While the “venomous scurrility” of personal attacks caused by press partisanship and press sensationalism have lost their dominant role in modern newspapers, newspapers are now widely criticized for their generally innocuous and inoffensive character and their failure to take a stand on vital public issues. Robert Fulford, while Book Editor of the *Toronto Daily Star*, described Canadian newspapers as “Victorian product[s], turned out in a modern setting” and suggested:

... if a foreigner, never having visited Canada, were to spend a few weeks reading all of our papers, he would emerge with a picture of a country which is dull, smug, and provincial. This is not the Canada that I know; but it is the Canada which our press reflects. My own observation is that there is no Canadian community which is as dull as the newspapers it reads. In general, I believe, English Canadian newspapers follow rather than lead their readers. . . . One of the central reasons for this is the built-in bias of the press . . . in favour of authority.<sup>31</sup>

Numerous critics are of the opinion that the pioneer subservience to authority and the political party bias of the second and third press periods has been replaced by a “free press” which remains equally ineffective and considerably more innocuous.

Content of the twentieth-century Canadian press is considered less sensational than American counterparts. D. L. B. Hamlin, considering the relationship between the press and its public, concludes:

We seem to feel, in a typically Canadian fashion, that our papers should be better than they are. But in the same breath we congratulate ourselves that they are not as bad as the worst examples of yellow journalism in other countries, usually the United States.<sup>32</sup>

In support, Kesterton has noted a unique trend whereby there is a high correlation between nearness of a disaster, calamity, or act of violence and the prominence and space devoted to its report in Canadian newspapers. Likewise, such news which directly affects or concerns its readers is emphasized above news of merely human interest value. Thus, between 1901 and 1914, the Quebec bridge collapse, the Regina cyclone, the sinking of the Titanic and the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand received more press coverage than did violent Negro lynchings, and the exploits of Jack the Ripper and Buffalo Bill.<sup>33</sup>

Between 1914 and 1918, events of the war dominated press content. War reports spared little detail in recording the horrifying and intense violence. While the newspapers reported on violence, they were also the central figures in violent incidents initiated by the divisive conscription issue. French-Canadian papers threatened either secession or revolution, mobs dynamited newspaper offices and stoned their windows.

The Twenties, often described as “the carefree age,” was the decade of rum-running and gang warfare, and the newspapers recorded “the wave of crime and

outlawry which is sweeping over the American continent, particularly in the United States.”<sup>34</sup>

Many events were sensational rather than of long-term consequence. The Black Sox baseball fix, the murder of Bobby Franks by Loeb and Leopold, the Teapot Dome scandal, the Hall-Mills murder trial, the lynching of American negroes, the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, the prolonged ordeal of Sacco and Vanzetti before their execution in 1927, the ruthless lawlessness of Al Capone, the St. Valentine’s Day massacre, and Sing Sing electric chair deaths of Mrs. Ruth Snyder and Judd Gray, were discreditable American events reported in Canadian newspapers. Some comparable Canadian stories given coverage were the assassination of Peter Veregin, the disappearance of Ambrose Small, the failure of the Home Bank, the murderous career and execution of the Winnipeg Strangler, and the “I’m Alone” affair.<sup>35</sup>

During the 1930’s, crime and violence were characteristically represented in the Canadian press:

The kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby, the trial and execution of Bruno Richard Hauptmann, the death of John Dillinger, the plane crash deaths of Will Rogers, Wiley Post and Knute Rockne, the crash of the Hindenburg and R101, the manhunt for the “Mad Trapper” of the Canadian North, the imprisonment of Al Capone, the Ace Bailey hockey injury, the assassinations of Huey Long, Mayor Cermak of Chicago, the prime minister of Japan, the president of Peru, Chancellor Dollfuss of Austria, King Alexander of Yugoslavia and Finance Minister Barthou of France, the misdeeds of Mayor James Walker of New York City, the Morro Castle and Moose River Mine disasters, the kidnapping of John Labatt, and the parole and violent death of Red Ryan, were startling events of the decade. But the events that pointed the way most clearly to a new era in world history took place outside of North America. Such events were recorded by the world press, including that of Canada. They included the Sino-Japanese War, Allied evacuation of the Rhineland, Oxford Group activities, the rise of the Nazi party, the death of Hindenburg and Hitler’s ascent to power, Mussolini’s invasion of Ethiopia, the Spanish Civil War, Hitler’s seizure of Austria, the Polish Corridor dispute, and the Munich Pact which was supposed to guarantee “peace in our time.”<sup>36</sup>

Again during the Second World War, press accounts of violence were provided in graphic detail. The newspapers, now with more efficient newsgathering services, “recorded the battles and campaigns in overwhelming detail.”<sup>37</sup>

1940 has been set as the date from which serious treatment of the news definitely began to dominate over the sensational in both Canada and the United States. However, Stuart Keate, publisher of *The Victoria Daily Times*, notes that the Canadian press is accused of sensational tactics even today; an accusation which he disputes:

To those who cry sensationalism in the press, I would suggest that there are more bodies strewn around in one hour of “The Untouchables” than you’ll find in a week’s newspapers. It has been estimated that television is 85 per cent entertainment and 15 per cent information, newspapers just the reverse.<sup>38</sup>

Keate considers the most serious pressure exerted on the press to be the threat of censorship. Except during

wartime, Canada has enjoyed a large degree of press freedom during the twentieth century. In times of peace, attempts to control the content of the press have emanated primarily from local groups or provincial governments with a vigilant press and the federal government successfully defeating content controls.

Two major incidents of attempted press censorship stand out in Canadian history in which provincial legislation seeking to muzzle the press has been overcome by a nationally united press effort and federal government sympathies. Less often, and on a much smaller scale, moralists have assaulted the press in their earnest belief that they are helping society by suppressing the unpleasant truth reported by the press.<sup>39</sup>

The government of Alberta sought to muzzle the press when, in 1935, William Aberhart’s Social Credit party succeeded the United Farmers and formed the provincial government of Alberta. Official parliamentary opposition was virtually non-existent, and for this reason the press adopted the critical role. Constant criticism of Aberhart and his economic policies provoked the premier into introducing “An Act to Ensure the Publication of Accurate News and Information” which came to be called the “gag law.” Aberhart professed the Act would “restore Freedom [of the press] from the clutches of financial and political organizations.” Under J. Imrie of *The Edmonton Journal*, the press united to fight the bill, and the CPA and the CDNA lent support. Even government opposition was strong. Lieutenant Governor, J. C. Bowen, refused to assent to the bill and the federal government referred Aberhart’s legislation to the Supreme Court of Canada for a constitutionality ruling. When the Supreme Court declared the bill to be *ultra vires*, Aberhart appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The Privy Council decision upheld that of Chief Justice Davis, who wrote:

The statute [British North America Act] contemplates a parliament working under the influence of public opinion and public discussion. There can be no controversy that such institutions derive their efficacy from the free public discussion of affairs, from criticism and answer and counter-criticism, from attack upon policy and administration and defence and counter-attack; from the freest and fullest analysis and examination from every point of view of political proposals, . . . The right of public discussion is, of course, subject to legal restrictions; those based upon considerations of decency and public order, and others conceived for the protection of various private and public interests with which, for example, the laws of defamation and sedition are concerned. In a word, freedom of discussion means, to quote the words of Lord Wright in *James v Commonwealth* (1936 A.C. at p. 627), ‘freedom governed by law.’ Even within its legal limits, it is liable to abuse and grave abuse, and such abuse is constantly exemplified before our eyes; but it is axiomatic that the practice of this right of free public discussion of public affairs, notwithstanding its incidental mischiefs, is the breath of life for parliamentary institutions.<sup>40</sup>

While Aberhart’s case was in the Supreme Court, a libel case seemed to prove that existing Canadian laws were

adequate protection against public abuse without Aberhart's new legislation. Two Social Crediters, G. F. Powell and J. L. Unwin, produced and distributed a pamphlet entitled "Bankers' Toadies" containing the following statement:

my child, you should never say hard or unkind things about Bankers' Toadies. God made Bankers' Toadies, just as he made snakes, slugs, snails and other creepy-crawly, treacherous and poisonous things. Nevertherefore, abuse them – just exterminate them,

and to prevent all evasion  
Demand the Result you want  
\$25.00 a month  
and a lower cost to live.<sup>41</sup>

On the opposite side of the pamphlet was printed the names of nine prominent Edmonton businessmen. Powell and Unwin were charged with counselling to murder, seditious libel, and defamatory libel. Only the last charge held and the former offender was sentenced to six months in jail and then deportation while the latter received three months' imprisonment.

The second attempt to muzzle the press originated during the "red scare" following World War I but culminated in the Padlock Law in Quebec under the Duplessis government. Following the Winnipeg strike of 1919, Arthur Meighen's Conservative government passed Section 98 of the Criminal Code which provided severe penalties for persons convicted of sedition, publication of seditious material, and unlawful association. This section was invoked several times against suspected Communists between 1930 and 1935, but was highly unpopular legislation and was repealed under the Liberal government in 1936.

Premier Duplessis of Quebec, believing the repeal of Section 98 left Canada exposed to the dangerous menace of communism, designed "An Act to Protect the Province against Communist Propaganda." The Act gave the Quebec Attorney General power to close down any establishment suspected of harbouring communist activities and made it illegal to publish, or distribute "any newspaper, pamphlet, circular, document, or writing whatsoever propagating or tending to propagate communism or bolshevism."<sup>42</sup> Honourable T. J. Coonan, minister without portfolio in the Duplessis government, stated the law was designed to deal with "thousands and thousands of people who are communists without being aware of it."<sup>43</sup> The Padlock Law gave the provincial government the authority to declare persons as communists or bolsheviks and the Attorney-General, who happened to be Duplessis, became "policeman, prosecutor, judge, sheriff and hangman."<sup>44</sup> Between 1936 and 1939, the Act was invoked thirteen times and with Duplessis' return to power, it was invoked again in 1944, 1948, and 1950. Finally in 1957 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled it unconstitutional.

Today, laws dealing with the press are those of defamatory libel, contempt of court, obscenity, blasphemy, sedition and the Defence of Canada

Regulations under the War Measures Act. The laws of libel, designed to protect the citizen from abuse by the press, and those dealing with contempt of court, designed to ensure fair trials for those before the courts, are the most widely used today. Prohibitions against violence are included under obscenity regulations. An obscene publication is "any publication, a dominant characteristic of which is undue exploitation of sex or of sex and any one or more of the following subjects, namely, crime, horror, cruelty and violence." In addition, Tariff Regulation 1201 bars "treasonable or seditious or indecent literature" from entry into Canada. Under "indecent" fall any publications excessively dealing with crime, horror, cruelty and violence. On the whole, there have been few cases of rigid application of the obscenity laws in Canada because of the vagueness of definition of the prohibited literature.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, regulations dealing with blasphemy and sedition have lain dormant.

Under wartime conditions, restraints on the "freedom of the press" in Canada, as in most countries, have been stronger, more arbitrary and authoritarian. Prior to the First World War, the inefficiency of communications facilities were effective in themselves in guarding military secrets. Since World War I, censorship machinery has evolved from a voluntary, self-imposed system to a highly coordinated government-imposed one.

During the First World War, Lieutenant Colonel Ernest Chambers, Chief Press Censor of Canada, and a small staff of newspaper men worked on amicable terms with editors and publishers, suggesting information useful to the enemy, threatening security of the armed forces and the security of the Canadian people which should not be published. Although Orders-in-Council authorized the Postmaster General to prohibit newspapers from the mails (Nov. 16, 1914), made it a crime to import or publish or possess newspapers in foreign languages (Oct. 1, 1918), and a regulation of June 10, 1915, made press censorship compulsory and allowed for the search of any printing house by government officials, each editor, in a sense, was his own censor, the official censor acting largely in an advisory capacity; the powers outlined in the regulations were never exercised.<sup>46</sup>

When the Second World War broke out, censorship was again, in theory, self-imposed but Gillis Purcell, in an exhaustive analysis of wartime press censorship, calls "voluntary censorship" deceptive.

It is a gracious gesture to the press and it is comforting to the public to feel that in this freedom-loving democracy editors are their own censors, but it is all a sham and a delusion. The press can and does at times influence the judgment of the censors in situations that are free from political repercussions, but the moment the political fortunes of a government are imperilled, the censor no longer sits in the saddle; it is the government that rides. It will be so with any government in any circumstances if the exigency is sufficiently urgent.<sup>47</sup>

The Defence of Canada Regulations were invoked on September 3, 1939, and were derived from the authority of the War Measures Act. This remains the sole legal tool of censorship during emergencies today. Regulations provided for fines, imprisonment, and printing suspension as penalties for the publication of news or comment considered dangerous and not cleared by a censor prior to printing. Penalties were only invoked through court action however. Although Regulation 15 gave the Secretary of State powers of prior censorship, these were never used.

Wartime censorship caused considerable concern among newspaper editors, and the CDNA<sup>48</sup> appointed a Freedom of the Press Committee in 1944 to discuss various aspects of the subject. A primary objective of the Committee was to secure an amendment to the British North America Act which would guarantee press freedom.<sup>49</sup> Prime Minister King expressed his opinion that no formal guarantee was necessary for the maintenance of press freedom in Canada since freedom was strongly embedded. The Committee persisted in its proposals of amendment, pointing out a number of instances to support its contention that the press was not as secure as it appeared on the surface. When the House of Commons Select Committee on Human Rights was set up in 1948, the CDNA prepared a detailed brief for presentation to prove the need for a statutory guarantee of freedom of the press. The CDNA was particularly concerned with "the probability that despotic regulation of the medium of radio might ultimately extend to the sphere of the press."<sup>50</sup> Despite wide circulation of its brief and its energetic determination, the CDNA did not succeed in securing a formal guarantee of press freedom in Canada.

In reaction to the Davey Committee's detailed analysis of the Canadian press, the editor of *The Ottawa Journal*, Norman Smith, expressed the current view of the appropriate relationship between the press and the government:

The public has a right to take a good hard look at the press from time to time. But I am convinced that governments should leave the running of the press to the press. If some of us are making more money than is good for us, tax us. If we gang up or monopolize against the public interest, crack down. If we are seditious or libellous or otherwise unlawful, hale us into court. But as to what we put in our papers – good, bad, indecent, or incomplete – let the public be the judge. Men of politics shouldn't shape the press. Not if it is to be free.<sup>51</sup>

#### A Note on Canadian Fiction: Survival

Canadian fiction has not generally been considered a violent fiction and thus, attempts to control violent content have been restricted, for the most part, to the duties of customs officials, barring the importation of United States products. Margaret Atwood's thematic analysis of Canadian literature, entitled *Survival*, prompts a re-examination of Canadian literature. She suggests that violence is as dominant in Canadian as in American literature, though the nature of the violence is

quite different. While violence in American fiction is that of man against man, Canadians draw their murder weapons from nature in the form of snow, water, or "death by bushing."<sup>52</sup> Death at the hands of nature is not natural or accidental death as it is portrayed in Canadian literature, but there is something in nature which actually kills the individual, says Atwood.<sup>53</sup> E. J. Pratt's treatment of the sinking of the *Titanic*, causing the drowning deaths of most of its passengers, is a typical Canadian nature killing.

Even Canadian animal stories are tragic in comparison to U.S. examples. American animal stories usually celebrate the trapping of an animal and are told from the hunter's viewpoint while Canadian authors write from the animal's point of view. Margaret Atwood relates her childhood reactions to Canadian animal stories as more emotionally upsetting than American horror comics of the forties because the Canadian products were truer to reality.

... after hours we read stacks of Captain Marvel, Plastic Man and Batman comic books, an activity delightfully enhanced by the disapproval of our elders. However, someone had given us Charles G. D. Roberts' *Kings in Exile* for Christmas, and I snivelled my way quickly through these heart-wrenching stories of animals caged, trapped and tormented. That was followed by Ernest Thompson Seton's *Wild Animals I Have Known*, if anything more upsetting because the animals were more actual – they lived in forests, not circuses – and their deaths more mundane: the deaths, not of tigers, but of rabbits... I was just learning what to expect: in comic books and things like *Alice in Wonderland* or Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*, you got rescued or you returned from the world of dangers to a cozy safe domestic one; in Seton and Roberts, because the world of dangers was the same as the real world, you didn't. But when in high school I encountered – again as a Christmas present – something labelled more explicitly as Canadian Literature, the Robert Weaver and Helen James anthology, *Canadian Short Stories*, I wasn't surprised. There they were again, those animals on the run, most of them in human clothing this time, and those humans up against it; here was the slight mistake that led to disaster, here was the fatal accident; this was a world of frozen corpses, dead gophers, snow, dead children, and the ever-present feeling of menace, not from an enemy set over against you but from everything surrounding you. The familiar peril lurked behind every bush, and *I knew the names of the bushes*.<sup>54</sup>

David Bakan, professor of psychology at York University, confirms Margaret Atwood's impressions on the effect of cruelty in animal stories when he writes:

Because of the child's sense of being victimized and because of his identification with animals, the purveyors of fictional materials for consumption by children have a cardinal rule not to show an animal being killed. It horrifies children too much, for it comes too close to the real condition in their minds. Thus, it is perfectly all right, for example, to show battle scenes with human beings being slaughtered by the hundreds and by the thousands. It is perfectly all right to show children scenes of men being mutilated, tortured, shot, and killed. But one dare not show the slaughter of a pig in an abattoir. The latter has a realism for the child that cannot easily be defended against.

The normal repressive mechanisms are simply inadequate to cope with it.<sup>55</sup>

Apart from animal stories, other Canadian fiction can be emotionally upsetting in its pessimism and mood of anxiety. Margaret Atwood writes:

Our stories are likely to be tales not of those who made it but of those who made it back, from the awful experience – the North, the snow storm, the sinking ship – that killed everyone else. The survivor has no triumph or victory but the fact of his survival; he has little after his ordeal that he did not have before except gratitude for having escaped with his life.<sup>56</sup>

Canadians, and to a greater extent, French Canadians, hold a marked preference for the negative, for expressions of pessimism and an “almost intolerable anxiety” which Atwood attributed to a reflection of the Canadian struggle for national survival and the Québécois struggle against cultural extinction. French-Canadian preference for saints and martyrs at the moment of their suffering and mutilation, she asserts, is a definite fictional reflection of the French-Canadian struggle for survival.<sup>57</sup>

Margaret Atwood is primarily concerned with illustrating that there is a unique Canadian identity revolving around the symbol of survival and which is reflected unmistakably in our literature. Though it may be reassuring that she found a unique Canadian identity and literature, the abundance of pessimism, death, cruelty, and violence, comparable to that in American literature, is disheartening. While the American individualist is portrayed as successful in his fight for survival, the Canadian fights determinedly, but ultimately loses. Though the setting, characters, and outcome are different, the violence of the struggle is essentially the same.

## Chapter Six

# The Control of Radio

### The Nature of Wireless Communication

Throughout history it has generally been accepted that the degree of “communal civilization and enlightenment” has correlated with the recognition or advocacy of freedom of speech. Conversely, in periods of “ignorance and oppression,” such freedom was conspicuously absent.<sup>1</sup> With the advent of radio in the early twentieth century, society was forced to re-examine and redefine such concepts as “censorship,” “regulation,” and even “copyright.”<sup>2</sup> The idealistic proponents of absolute freedom of radio speech were countered by others who more correctly saw the immense difficulties in achieving open access to the airwaves. B. K. Sandwell, noted Canadian media watcher and practitioner, metaphorically contrasted easily accessible soapboxes in Hyde Park and the restricted number of radio spaces available for public addresses. In radio, he noted, “the pitches are limited” for the number of opportune spaces where barkers could pitch and listeners could hear would be exceeded by the numbers of willing pitchers.<sup>3</sup>

Very soon after its invention and adoption, it was clear that the very nature of the radio medium demanded an unprecedented form of regulation to control usage of the radio airwaves, for over-crowding meant interference and in fact negated the new possibilities which the novel form of “communication” offered. It was only after a long series of international conferences had established and ratified a satisfactory system of wavelength assignments that attention could be shifted to a concern with content rather than the physical problems of the medium. (As an example, in the late 1930s Canada and the U.S. were still trying to come to a satisfactory arrangement regarding the allocation of wavelengths.) In the end, each country was forced to create its own regulatory system, and as a result, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States evolved systems compatible with their own philosophies concerning the importance of the medium in relation to the nature of each country as a whole. Britain opted for total governmental control, the United States, after much debate, decided on a purely commercial system,

while Canada, as expected, eventually had both private and public systems.

### Control of the Ether<sup>4</sup>

The Marconi International Marine Communications Company was created in 1900 to establish wireless stations along trade routes. Ships were started by Marconi operators instructed to refuse communication with users of other patents. “This dog-in-the-manger policy was the first gesture in a wireless war, a precursor of a virtual state of anarchy to which that means of communication came within a decade.”<sup>5</sup>

With no international regulations as to wireless use, radio operators treated the medium as a new toy – no operator admitted precedence to another and liners were especially contemptuous of freighters’ rights to communicate. When not transmitting or receiving legitimate messages, operators chattered, gossiped, feuded, and quarrelled in Morse Code, frequently disrupting other opportunities for message exchange. To “choke” such irresponsibility, operators would “throw a book on the key” setting up a continuous roar and halting all communication within range. Such manoeuvres were consequently “filling the air at times with curses, aspersions and choice obscenities.”<sup>6</sup>

With so much technical and human interference, wireless service was far below an efficient standard. In 1903, the first International Wireless Conference congregated and problem issues were discussed, though no action was taken. Further meetings ensued, and in 1908 the long-recognized need for organization in the ether was at last realized, albeit in small measure, by the ratification of an international distress signal – “S.O.S.”<sup>7</sup> Technical improvements were constantly being developed in laboratories all over the world as interest widened and transmissible distance grew.

While Marconi concentrated on increasing distance, Reginald Aubrey Fessenden (born in Canada, though of old New England Puritan ancestry) succeeded in adding music and voice to the dot and dash of the 1906 wireless ether. Lee de Forest also pursued broadcasting beyond “sweet melody,” and it was his experiments

which provided the bond

for a growing brotherhood, scattered far and wide, that already numbered thousands; a host of experimenters, of every age and status; of listeners who didn't merely listen but communicated feverishly with each other . . . boys – and men – were constantly filing down nickels to make coherers, or winding wires around round objects – broken baseball bats or, later on, Quaker Oats boxes.<sup>8</sup>

These amateurs added considerably to the content of the airwaves. The broadcasting historian, Erik Barnouw, quoted Stanley R. Manning reminiscing about the first receiver he built in 1909, which interfered with attempts of the Brooklyn Navy Yard to communicate with ships at sea:

They wanted me to lay off when they were on the air. I wasn't perturbed about it because there weren't any laws, rules or regulations in those days. All they could do was ask me to be careful about it, which naturally I was, too.<sup>9</sup>

Another chronicler of radio's early days, Alvin Harlow, seems to have been less enthusiastic about amateur infatuation with wireless:

The amateurs in America provided an even worse problem than warring companies . . . Radio magazines were springing into being everywhere and they, the popular science magazines and the newspapers were crammed with articles and diagrams telling how to build home radio sending and receiving sets, including aerials for both. Clumsy, grotesque towers began thrusting up into the air, the owners began expressing their egos and having no end of fun. There might be dozens of stations, amateur and professional within a thickly populated area, all using the same or nearly the same wavelength, and chaos was but a feeble word for the situation.<sup>10</sup>

He even cites such instances of amateur chicanery as sending false orders and distress signals to naval vessels.

At hearings held by a U.S. Congressional committee in 1912, the amateurs countered Navy complaints of amateur interference with transcripts of conversations between officers or officers and women exposing cheap gossip, intrigue, assignations, and amatory trivia which caused the Navy much embarrassment. This rather feeble ploy of humiliation failed, for, as Harlow notes, "the amateurs lost. Again, as in the case of movie censorship and prohibition, unbridled liberty had become licence and slain itself."<sup>11</sup>

In response to "widespread public demand," the U.S. federal government "hesitatingly" passed an act in 1912 which authorized the Secretary of Commerce and Labor to issue licences to stations engaging in interstate or foreign communication and prohibited unlicensed operators or stations from communication by radio.<sup>12</sup> The amateurs were angered by these restrictions, but in practice the law introduced only minor restraints. The U.S. Attorney General claimed the Secretary of Commerce could not refuse a licence to an applicant and, while the allocation of wavelengths was part of the post, there was apparently some doubt as to enforcement. It was not until February, 1923, that a U.S. Court of Appeals affirmed the Secretary's powers to designate a station's wavelength. Approximately 1,000 existing

transmitters were licensed immediately, and, despite the original amateur cries of doom for their hobby, the numbers of licences issued continued to rise.<sup>13</sup>

Great Britain had taken this first step at wireless control through licensing eight years before, with its Wireless Telegraphy Act which required all transmitters and receivers of wireless signals to be licensed by the Post Office. In Canada, the Department of Marine and Fisheries took care of this function, and in 1905, anyone "establishing, installing or working apparatus for wireless telegraphy" required a licence. Stiff fines and forfeiture of apparatus were the Canadian penalties for transmitting or receiving signals on unlicensed equipment.<sup>14</sup> In both Canada and Great Britain the Minister responsible for licensing also had discretionary powers over who should receive licences. The U.S. Secretary of Commerce had no such control.

It is perhaps a reflection of British and Canadian public consciousness that attempts were made to control misuse of the airwaves several years before the U.S. took any legislative action in this direction.<sup>15</sup> Possibly, the eight-year American lag in legislation really was, as Harlow infers, because licensing represented a threat to "old rugged [American] individualism."<sup>16</sup>

#### Beginnings of Broadcasting: Interpretations of Public Interest

##### *The United States:*

The outbreak of the first World War silenced amateur radio and all wireless stations were commandeered by their respective governments, though research and experimentation continued. The historian Asa Briggs, in his chronicle of the BBC, claimed that "organized broadcasting grew naturally out of these war-time developments. The surprise is that there were still so few people who saw its possibilities."<sup>17</sup>

In 1915, David Sarnoff, an employee of the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company, was one of the few visionaries who viewed radio as a household information and entertainment utility. He foresaw wireless as a vehicle for culturally supplying the home with concerts, lectures, music recitals, baseball scores and events of national importance – a proposition Sarnoff considered especially attractive to "farmers and others living in outlying districts removed from cities."<sup>18</sup> In partial fulfilment of the Sarnoff dream, the first regularly scheduled licensed broadcasting of programs began in 1920 in Canada, Great Britain, and the U.S.

As with more recent dreams of a "new rural society" via the wired city, the excitement of innovation in communications media brought the messianic and demonic qualities of radio to the fore.<sup>19</sup> In his exhaustive study of responses to new mass media in the American periodical press, Robert E. Davis found that 1921-1923 marked a period in which writers joined such visionaries as Lee de Forest and David Sarnoff in exploring the vast potential of radio. Advocates hailed

the variety of material which broadcasting would bring to home, school, and church, lauded the democracy of the radio medium, and named it second only to the movies as a national amusement that educated as it entertained. On the opposite side, detractors feared that other amusements would suffer as audiences turned to radio, that the faithful would decrease and church congregations would shrink, that newspapers would be unable to compete with broadcasting in the sphere of news dissemination. "Radio, said those suspicious of innovation, was but another complicating and disrupting force in society."<sup>20</sup>

The "complicating and disrupting force" mushroomed in the United States – in 1922, the first year of availability of radio sets for the general public, RCA radio sales amounted to \$11 million. In 1923 it rose to \$22.5 million; and in 1926 to \$400 million.<sup>21</sup> American radio manufacturing firms amalgamated to avoid patent wars and evolved into broadcasting companies to create market potential for their products. The public, which had been content to hear any disconnected series of recognizable sounds during the experimental earphone stage of radio, now demanded better reception technically, and quality material for listening.

While Sarnoff favoured revenue from licensing and a public endowment scheme to finance program production, AT&T, then one of the pioneer broadcast firms, believed radio broadcasts should be supported by the originator, not unlike telephone conversations.<sup>22</sup> The practice of radio-equipment manufacturers' airing programs to foster radio sales provoked AT&T ire: "Those who were using the new medium simply to promote their own products, far from performing a public service, were exploiting a popular craze."<sup>23</sup> In 1922, WEAF, the AT&T station in New York City, initiated paid sponsorship, and by 1925 the programming question of "who should pay?" had a commercial answer to rising production costs. Subsequently, radio "networks" evolved as stations linked with each other, allowing national coverage of programming.

Herbert Hoover, then U.S. Secretary of Commerce, had expressed a concern for minimal governmental controls to ensure radio's future as a "public concern impressed with the public trust and to be considered primarily from the standpoint of public interest to the same extent and upon the basis of the same general principles as our other public utilities."<sup>24</sup> His concern over rampant commercialism caused him to vacillate in speeches between policing and self-regulation.<sup>25</sup>

The early 1920s had been subject to a "suppression mania,"<sup>26</sup> and broadcasting executives, nervous about a "red" on the air, had equipped studio engineers with an emergency device to censor radical views by immediately switching over to the broadcasting of phonograph records. Olga Petrova's nursery rhyme on birth control and poem on prostitution, risqué jokes, and radical opinions were hastily removed from the air in 1921. Concerned with their image of respectability, wireless

telephony executives heavily censored a talk on cigarettes and delayed a "discreet" discussion of tooth care until the ethics and etiquette of broadcasting such a "personal" topic could be debated.<sup>27</sup>

By 1925, Hoover addressed his fourth National Radio Conference and reaffirmed American "freedom" of the air:

The decision that we should not imitate some of our foreign colleagues with governmentally controlled broadcasting supported by a tax upon the listener has secured for us a far greater variety of programs and excellence in service free of cost to the listener. This decision has avoided the pitfalls of political, religious and social conflicts in the use of speech over the radio which no Government could solve – it has preserved free speech to this medium.<sup>28</sup>

The incredible delusion under which Hoover operated becomes readily evident when the realm of unofficial censorship is considered.

The outrage over corrupt public resource management (or lack thereof) in the Teapot Dome Scandal, directed attention to other areas of the public domain which required safeguarding, and resulted in an idealistic 1927 radio law and the establishment of the Federal Radio Commission.<sup>29</sup> Sixty days after passage of the act, all existing licences were voided and re-applications were required, which, it was hoped, would formulate the brave new American radio world. Censorship powers were denied the FRC (except for a prohibition of "obscene, indecent or profane language"), but infringement of "public interest, convenience and necessity" could lead to licence revocation.<sup>30</sup>

The NBC and CBS networks continued to transmit largely musical offerings in 1928-9, but radio drama was growing.<sup>31</sup> By 1929, *Amos 'n' Andy* was nationally syndicated and widely celebrated in the U.S. and Canada. The racism of the characterization and dialogue, which seems so apparent today, elicited no comment. The happy-go-lucky ghetto image was reinforced to maintain the delusion that "they" were better off where they really were; "that South Side poverty was somehow charming and fitting . . . It was not an accident that 'Amos 'n' Andy' was a national triumph. It was virtually a national self-expression, a vivid amusement park image of its time."<sup>32</sup>

In eighteen months between 1928 and 1929, RCA stock climbed over 600 per cent for radio had profited from the inflating credit bubble – until the stockmarket crash in late 1929. The panic of the depression caused many stations to leave the air, while others switched to time sales in pursuit of the departing advertising dollar. Stations could not afford record libraries, and hired live talent in the barter economy then in operation. 1929-32 marked increasing numbers of longer commercial announcements – "an almost spectacular retreat from previous standards."<sup>33</sup> Concert music almost vanished and astrology, numerology, and advice (social, medical, marital, spiritual) programs replaced it. By 1931,

virtually all sponsored network programs were developed and produced by advertising agencies rather than by networks or stations as before. To maintain their audience support, broadcasters rendered their offerings not only palatable, but wholesome. By the use of the censorship sieve "every possibly un-American and harmful ingredient (Bolshevism, Communism, Socialism, sex, free thought, Naktkultur, atheism, liberalism, radicalism, pessimism, etc.) [was] kept out of the ambrosia fed to listeners-in."<sup>35</sup> Only the decent American ideals were transmitted via *Rise of the Goldbergs*, *Mary and Bob*, and *True Story* – not much progress had been made since the suppression mania of the early days of broadcasting.

The FRC standards of "public interest, convenience and necessity" were sufficiently fluid and vague to allow for erratic censorship via licensing prerogatives, all the while enabling the Commission to disclaim violation of the "freedom" guaranteed by the act.

J. R. Brinkley, the infamous "goat-gland" doctor, established station KFKB to offer medical advice to his mail-order patent medicine following – the greatest attraction stemming from his promise to return the listless males of America to potency by means of a "compound" operation! The FRC denied his application for licence renewal in 1930, and Brinkley's subsequent appeal represented the first judicial consideration of FRC authority to control programs which it considered not to be in the public interest. Accusations of censorship were judicially circumvented as the court reaffirmed the FRC's right to consider "past conduct" of licence applicants regarding service to public interest.<sup>36</sup> Consideration of past conduct as justification for licence revocation implicitly assumed a knowledge that future conduct by the station in question would be the same. Whether or not this assumption was valid did not negate the fact that censorship had a much broader definition than mere "prior scrutiny" by a government body. Regardless of FRC denial of censorship powers – censor they did.

It might be interesting to note at this point that even after the FRC failed to renew his radio licence, Brinkley narrowly missed becoming Governor of Kansas as a write-in candidate. He ran officially in the 1932 gubernatorial race and broadcast from Mexico to his loyal audience.<sup>37</sup> The public demand obviously outranked legal consideration of the public utility.

In 1934, the U.S. Federal Communications Act was passed; basically a re-enactment of the 1927 legislation but broadening several parameters. The Federal Communications Commission replaced the FRC, and the new body also held that the public interest of programming content would be considered in the granting of licences. Again, "public interest" was a discretionary term and again, the FCC obtusely denied that it had censorial authority. The amount of investment by broadcasters, and the short renewal period, more or less assured station compliance with

FCC suggestions – the "censorship of fear" or "raised eyebrow" was extremely effective in America.

Diverse incidents provoked FCC intervention – as a result of a Mae West/Charlie McCarthy skit on Adam and Eve, fraught with innuendos, all stations carrying the program were informed that the event would be considered in their licence renewal applications. To avoid further demerits, NBC immediately banned the mention of West's name from broadcasts on their network stations. The local stations complained that they were victimized, in that they had had no opportunity to eliminate elements of bad taste in advance of the West broadcast.<sup>38</sup>

FCC chairmen frequently employed speech-making campaigns to issue covert threats regarding program content, advertising of alcohol and laxatives, cooperation with the National Recovery Administration, increases in educational content, elimination of simulated newscasts, editorializing by broadcasters, and similar matters.<sup>39</sup> Except for ensuring that stations were not licensed where talent was unavailable, the FCC apparently trusted sponsors to insist on, and thereby control, the quality of entertainment, and tried not to concern itself with the matter.<sup>40</sup> As mentioned above, networks and sponsors combined to maintain only wholesome images in American radio, though the definition of "wholesome" occasionally provoked listener response, especially with regard to crime radio serials as will be shown.

To forestall legal restraint, a voluntary program code was adopted in 1937 by the National Association of Broadcasters which delineated acceptable standards of programs and advertising content. No penalty for violations was provided for the rather conservative standards, and many questions were raised regarding the Code's constitutionality and effectiveness.<sup>41</sup> Three years before, a Committee of Five for the Betterment of Radio had banded together to ward off any danger of extension to radio of the Roman Catholic Church (through the Legion of Decency) crusade against indecent movies. These five orchestra leaders and broadcasters promised to scrutinize and ban any songs which could be construed as suggestive, veiled, or off-colour in interpretation.<sup>42</sup> Once again the concept of self-regulation was apparently a justifiable form of social control for American radio.

In an article written for *Hollywood Quarterly*,<sup>43</sup> Robert Shaw noted that, as economic and political pressures intensified, there was an inevitable increase in the effort to control radio, and to manipulate the public medium for private purposes and specialized economic or political ends. He observed five aspects of "restrictive pressure" as being prevalent and recurrent in the American radio industry: (1) the political type of censorship, the effort to use political power to invalidate existing radio laws, exemplified by the Rankin Committee on Un-American Activities; (2) the type of censorship originating in the stations and networks, and

aimed at keeping off the air certain kinds of programs that may not agree with the opinions or tastes of those in direct control of broadcasting, for example, the NAB Code abhorrence of "controversial issues"; (3) the type of censorship exercised with the specific intent of influencing the selection or interpretation of news – editorializing was considered a mortal American sin; (4) a masked censorship which cluttered the air with profitable commercial nonsense of no public interest or necessity, thereby crowding out excellence; (5) a public censorship which resisted inferior programming by refusing to listen to it, an important threat to the principles of commercial broadcasting. All these paradigms of legal and illegal paternalism were present in so-called "free" American broadcasting on the radio, and in modified form interfered with the British and Canadian offerings on their own airwaves.

#### *Great Britain:*

The government of Great Britain, through various agencies, had kept a strict rein on wireless experimentation in that country via permissions granted or denied by the Post Office, and not always with total approval from official circles. Asa Briggs claimed the historic broadcast of singer Nellie Melba "was deplored because it represented a 'frivolous' use of a 'national service.'"<sup>44</sup> The pioneer Marconi broadcasts at Chelmsford were suspended in response to complaints of interference with other stations and a belief that Marconi was broadcasting for propagandistic rather than scientific purposes. As in the United States, amateur group pressure inspired the Post Office to relax the Defence of the Realm Act slightly and, while retaining substantial discretionary powers, to issue licences to all approved persons. Wireless was thus to be treated not as a personal pleasure but as a "definite object of scientific research or of general public utility."<sup>45</sup> The radio boom in the United States and the consequent chaos in the ether served as a warning for British policy makers – it was recognized that the "go-as-you-please" methods of the United States could have dangerous results in the small but densely populated United Kingdom.<sup>46</sup>

F. J. Brown, a British Post Office official, attended an American wireless conference in 1922 and returned to England to outline the essentials of British broadcasting policy. The result was "a combination of caution and abstineney typical of relationships between an autocratic concessionaire and an objectionable licence,"<sup>47</sup> eventually culminating in the 1922 formation of the British Broadcasting Company, a collection of radio manufacturers.

Once the decision had been made to structure the industry as a broadcasting monopoly, whose licence could be withdrawn by the Post Office for misbehaviour, attention shifted to a concern for content. As the *Manchester Guardian* noted in 1922, "The really vital point of control seems to have caused little comment or suggestion so far. Yet, on the assumption that the public

takes eagerly to the new method of communication, it is a matter of supreme importance that the judges of what is to be communicated should command a good name."<sup>48</sup> The definition of the components in "a good name" was rather rigidly specified and enforced in British broadcasting.

While the Post Office feared BBC airing of controversy, the newspapers feared the competition of broadcasting in news dissemination.<sup>49</sup> By 1924, BBC General Manager J. C. W. Reith had operationalized the public-service aspect of broadcasting by concentrating on four areas: a lack of dependence on the profit motive, national coverage, unified control, and "the maintenance of high standards, the provision of the best and the rejection of the hurtful. [For] Reith had no sympathy with the view that it is the task of the broadcaster to give the customer what he wants."<sup>50</sup> This attitude, of course, comprises the basic difference between American and British philosophies; the British would attempt to ensure that Robert Shaw's fourth concept of censorship, as described above, did not operate; the Americans would thrive on it.

Reith's requests for permission to broadcast Parliamentary debates were rejected in 1924, frustrating his attempts to make broadcasting educational in the widest sense. Speeches aired on controversial topics (world peace, League of Nations . . .) drew complaints from both sides, and officials claimed that this negated accusations of BBC bias.<sup>51</sup> Religion was almost as controversial a topic during the 1920s as politics. Nevertheless, Christianity served as the foundation for the moral tone of the programming on the BBC. Under Reith, programs broadcast on Sunday had to be framed with a respect for the Sabbath, a view which was met with considerable opposition during a period of declining religious social and moral influence. Under Reith, BBC program policy maintained that it could influence the large segment of the population outside the effective range of churches and should therefore resist rather than reflect secular trends.

After 1926, when broadcasting was extended beyond the few limited hours of the early twenties, religious programs occupied only one per cent of the total weekly air time, yet the ethics of airing only Christian philosophy on Sundays was debated in the periodical press and the Sabbath observation restrictions were gradually relaxed.<sup>52</sup> Although more seasonal variation existed in Britain than in America regarding allotment of air time to music programming, in both countries music always accounted for the largest proportion of broadcast hours during the 1920s and 1930s and, though it ranged from opera to jazz, it required little censorship or control.<sup>53</sup>

During the General Strike in Britain from May 3 to May 12, 1926, the British Broadcasting Company managed to retain independence from the government. Hampered by an official prohibition of broadcasting the words of a union speaker, the BBC was lauded for its part

in dispelling rumours and spreading optimism. The Company was attacked however, by listeners and government, for the lack of unionist news, for the delay of a churchmen's appeal to end the strike until after a formal government decision had been reached not to take over the BBC during the crisis, and for its frequent "editorials" on the situation.<sup>54</sup>

1927 saw the creation of the British Broadcasting Corporation, set up by Royal Charter to represent the public rather than manufacturing firms, as had been recommended by the Crawford Committee. The public-service function that Reith had outlined formed the basic assumption underlying British radio then, and remains so today. Revenue was gleaned from listener licence fees and the corporation was "invested with the maximum of freedom that parliament [was] prepared to concede."<sup>55</sup> The Postmaster General, however, retained extraordinary powers which enabled him to require the Corporation to refrain from sending any broadcast matter as specified in a written notice, and immediately instructed the Corporation that it was not to broadcast on matters of political, industrial, or religious controversy. This ban was not lifted until 1928, when policy was "experimentally" left to the discretion of the Director-General and the Governors.<sup>56</sup> This basic policy of public interest through control was lauded in Britain while the American commercial pattern attracted more British criticism than support.

The few occasions of attempted censorship of entertainment via pressure-group influence concluded in a re-affirmation of the British preference to "make up their own minds" whether or not material was blasphemous, sensational, or politically prejudiced.<sup>57</sup> In the absence of sponsors' concern regarding their commercial images, British "controlled" radio appeared to have been freer than the "uncensored" American variety.

#### *Canada:*

The number of Canadian broadcasting stations increased rapidly after the granting of the first commercial licence in 1922, most operated by newspapers or radio-equipment manufacturing firms hoping to promote their respective products. In this first decade of broadcasting, no specific Canadian decision was made regarding the structure of radio service. Both Canada and the United States assumed that the government concern should primarily be one of technical administration and not content-oriented as in Britain. Canadian political leaders, not realizing the implications of formulating public policy, followed the line of least resistance and undertook as little control as socially possible. During the mid-1920s, American usurpation of Canadian wavelengths focused attention on the problem of "interference" as a major point of contention. Thus a long series of negotiations between Canada and the U.S. began in an attempt to allot frequencies on a more equitable basis. A philosophical

difference of opinion arose – the U.S. supported wavelength allocation according to population, claiming that Canada had a sufficient number of frequencies, which could be optimized by increasing power. Ever conscious of the need to protect her rights, Canada preferred allotment by territory and wanted more frequencies. It was not until 1941 that Canada acquired assurance of a fair share in hemispheric frequency allocations.

Canadian businessmen had entered the radio broadcasting field to sell their radio equipment, promote their newspapers, or prevent radio competition for advertising revenue. Professor Frank Peers, in his history of Canadian broadcasting, noted that in 1928, many radio-station owners feared most broadcasting would become an unprofitable business, if attempts were made to establish larger stations for the scattered population. Only with a large, immediately accessible market of willing consumers listening to the radio could the principles of commercial broadcasting be profitably and successfully implemented. Canada's radio markets were diffused and the Department of Marine and Fisheries policy of allotting only one of the precious wavelengths to a city resulted in "phantom" stations sharing a wavelength, each broadcasting only a few hours per day. This situation did not facilitate the establishment of a loyal audience and Canadians generally listened to American stations more than to their own. Canadian stations were small, their schedules irregular, their broadcast hours short, and their average programs unexciting – not an ideal business situation.

Concerned about the attrition rate of Canadian radio stations, the government passed a bill in 1923 which allowed the broadcasting stations to receive a portion of the licence fees charged on receiving sets by the Department of Marine and Fisheries. The bill was necessitated by the demise of the only radio stations in Manitoba, both owned by newspapers. The Manitoba government was to operate a radio station financed by half the licence fees collected in the province. While Minister Lapointe expressed the opinion that a similar fee split should be allocated for radio services across Canada, the Manitoba arrangement was never extended to any other station or province.<sup>58</sup>

Throughout the decade of the Twenties, the government blustered and wavered on the issue of advertising as revenue. Peers claimed that receiving-set licences were commonly evaded by Canadians who felt that they too should enjoy "free" broadcasting as in the U.S. In 1923, the Radio Branch of the Department of Marine and Fisheries experimentally permitted "indirect" advertising (a sponsorship format) at any time; "direct" (hard-sell commercials) advertising was allowed before 6 p.m. Reviewing the advertising situation in 1925, the Department noted that little direct advertising had been employed. The following year its use was forbidden except by ministerial permission; indirect advertising was still permissible. By 1929, the

Aird Commission heard numerous complaints regarding the prevalence of direct advertising; regulations were obviously relaxed or ignored.<sup>59</sup>

Canadians were poorly served in urban areas by low-power stations, while many rural areas had no radio. Broadcast range could be extended by increasing power or by linking in a network structure, the latter structure being deemed essential for national coverage in Canada. The Canadian National Railway initiated a radio department in 1923, and gradually established network broadcasting, presenting "the most venturesome programs on the Canadian air" – operas, special events, school broadcasts, and a symphony series. Sir Henry Thornton, the initiator of CNR radio, viewed the medium as an instrument with which to serve the national interest, maintaining a physical, unifying link between the provinces.<sup>60</sup>

Frank Peers notes the dearth of criticism during the 1920s regarding the CNR radio's expenditure of public funds, rather surprising, considering the ongoing battle between public and private radio ownership interests. He attributes this lack of attention as possibly due to: 1. the small amount spent by the CNR in relation to their total operating budget; 2. a feeling that CNR was not the same as "the government," therefore not as subject to vociferous complaints; 3. the operating method of the radio network (a "phantom" system in part, which actually helped finance private stations by renting time on their air); 4. the welcomed Canadian programming which was competitive with the American product.<sup>61</sup>

In 1928, following complaints that the radio programming of the International Bible Students Association was "unpatriotic and abusive of all our churches," the Department of Marine and Fisheries took its first stand on Canadian program content, and revoked the licences of the Bible Students, and Universal Radio who shared a "phantom" station.<sup>62</sup> This action sparked a parliamentary controversy regarding the range of ministerial discretion, censorship, and the absence of a concrete broadcasting policy, which culminated in the establishment of a Royal Commission "to consider the manner in which the available channels can be most effectively used in the interests of Canadian listeners and in the national interests of Canada," and to make recommendations regarding future administration, control, and financing of Canadian broadcasting.<sup>63</sup>

Reporting in 1929, the Aird Commission recommended an autonomous broadcasting organization similar to the BBC, which would acquire and operate all private stations. As only indirect advertising would be allowed, licence fees would be increased and the government would grant funds to finance the system. Although numerous constitutional, financial, and philosophical problems were rampant in the report, by the end of 1929 the reaction was mostly favourable and the Department of Marine and Fisheries began drafting

legislation for introduction to the next Parliament. Still, no mention was made of program content.

Two influential organizations were also born at this time in Canada. The Canadian Association of Broadcasters was formed to deal with demands made by performers regarding copyright infringement of music played over the air. The Radio League was established in 1930, its policy based upon the Aird Report's principle of the public utility of radio; by 1932 it had the documented support of organizations and individuals totalling 1,055,000.<sup>64</sup>

Amidst this pressure to view and utilize radio as a tool of Canadian nationalism, American programming still occupied the vast majority of Canadian listening time. Not only did listeners pick up broadcasts directly from American stations but in 1930, CKGW, the station owned by the *Toronto Telegram*, actually became part of the NBC network, a practice copied by several other Canadian stations in the following years.<sup>65</sup> The CPR joined CNR in the broadcasting business, and the private/public ownership war continued to rage. Amidst this unsettled state in Canadian radio, the Duff Commission of 1931, appointed to inquire into the railway situation, also heard representatives from private stations claiming that radio facilities needed improvement only in the West and Maritime regions. Furthermore, there was little recognition of any need to go beyond the development of a Canadian musical consciousness.<sup>66</sup>

In 1931, a parliamentary committee on radio broadcasting considered briefs and submissions from 53 sources; its recommendations resulted in the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act of 1932. Prime Minister Bennett personally endorsed the nationalization of a string of high power radio stations supplemented by private, low-power local stations with a provision that the government could possibly take over all broadcasting in Canada.

Nationalization was most strongly advocated by those who resented "domination of the air by American programs of jazz, crooners, American oratory and infinitely wearisome advertising blurbs."<sup>67</sup> The view was widely held that radio had failed to live up to expectations and opportunities; many wished to eliminate private financial interests and adhere to the British system.<sup>68</sup> In a brief to the Fowler Commission on Broadcasting (1956), the Canadian Association of Broadcasters claimed the remarkable early expansion of Canadian radio, evident from 1922-29 when broadcasting was developed largely through citizen capital, was dramatically halted after threatened nationalization in 1932. The state of the economy and a fear of expropriation contributed to the dearth of private investment.<sup>69</sup>

Of the 108 regulations drafted by the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, 14 dealt with program content: only 40 per cent of the daily schedule could be composed of foreign imported programs, advertising

copy could be checked by the Commission, time allotted to commercials was not to exceed five per cent of program time except by permission, evening spot announcements were prohibited, prices were taboo in commercials, station editorials were not to be broadcast. Article 90 provided that no broadcasting station could broadcast any statements contrary to the expressed purpose of any existing legislation – a provision which was rescinded after pressure from the Opposition in Parliament, and replaced in 1935 by a modified version which could be easily evaded.<sup>70</sup>

In his history of Canadian broadcasting, Austin Weir claims the CRBC had “an extraordinary faculty for stumbling into situations that would provoke contention and unfavourable publicity.”<sup>71</sup>

In 1933 one hour nightly was allocated to national programming, three hours to programs of regional interest. Thomas Maher, responsible for assigning the national programming slots, filled three or four of the seven hours weekly available with French-language productions, which provoked a fury of protest from the Maritimes, Ontario, and Western Canada. Weir hastened to point out that it was not the French language which was deemed objectionable, rather interest in French courses was widespread in the West. The French language was however, associated with Roman Catholicism. Religious bigotry, as expressed by such nationally powerful organizations as the Orange Order and Western factions of the Ku Klux Klan, denounced the sudden airing of French programs across Canada. Mass protest rallies were staged, attended by thousands of members of groups such as the Protestant Vigilance Committee, The Royal Black Knights of Ireland, and the Sons of England of Prince Albert. All decried bilingualism. The vociferous prejudice, bigotry, and fear expressed by listeners outside Quebec might have been lessened had the French programs been introduced more gently into homes by occasional initial broadcasts, with a gradual buildup as acceptance increased. The CRBC apparently searched for a scapegoat instead of immediately correcting the situation as was ultimately necessary. Weir referred to the controversy as “the single most unfortunate incident in national broadcasting” and noted that its effects were felt decades later.<sup>72</sup>

Earlier in 1933, Judge Rutherford, Chief Prophet of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, was banned from all Canadian stations on the grounds that his talks included slanderous attacks on the Christian clergy and governmental authority. This brought on a campaign of tracts and petitions both supporting and denouncing the CRBC actions, a pattern almost identical to the 1928 prelude to the Aird Commission; but the CRBC ruling stood.<sup>73</sup>

The 1935 election campaign involved Conservative plans for the use of radio serials. Six “Mr. Sage” broadcasts were aired in September and October; the first made no mention of its political sponsor and was considered by listeners to have been a network dramatic

offering. Mr. Sage, a life-long Tory, held opinionated discussions with friends regarding election campaign issues and participants. Mackenzie King, then Opposition Leader, considered the broadcasts scurrilous, libellous, misrepresentative propaganda. The 1936 Radio Broadcasting Committee held lengthy discussions but gleaned little information regarding the broadcasts, and no Liberal satisfaction.<sup>74</sup>

Writing in *The Canadian Forum*, R. B. Tolbridge commented on CRBC independence, calling the Commission “practically a government department, subject to all the promises of partisan influence.” When it attempted to curb patent medicine charlatans, financial sharks, and mining racketeers with the aid of various better business bureaus, stock exchange heads, and the Department of National Health and Welfare, the Commission found that small station owners preferred obtaining revenue from such fraudulent advertisements to serving the public interest and possibly declaring subsequent bankruptcy. He considered the clamour of private radio for a semi-judicial body to regulate both the CRBC and private radio a ruse to bring about the kind of “emasculated and completely ineffectual ‘regulation’” that appeared in the U.S. under the Federal Communications Commission.<sup>75</sup> These were harsh words that expressed the general dissatisfaction with the CRBC, and the still smouldering battle between private and public ownership of Canadian radio.

These factors culminated in the Canadian Broadcasting Act of 1936. The offending CRBC was now defunct and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation replaced it with a Board of Governors to administer regulation of both Canadian broadcasting sectors. The pattern of dual broadcasting ownership had been uniquely established in Canada, although private stations continued to complain bitterly about restrictions on the use of recorded material, prohibition of price mention in advertisements, unduly heavy line charges, and reservation of time for CBC sustaining programs at the most profitable commercial hours.<sup>76</sup>

Offerings such as quality music, light entertainment, historical talks, and round-table discussions on constitutional matters drew praise from *Queen’s Quarterly* but not from everyone.<sup>77</sup> As in the United States, Canadian broadcasters frequently attempted to avoid public censure by exercising powers of prior censorship.

Father Charles Lanphier of the Radio League of St. Michael’s Church broadcast Catholic Sunday programs from Toronto which were countered by Rev. Morris Zeidman, a Presbyterian minister representing the Protestant Radio League, both of whom were accused several times of attacking each other’s faith. In January 1937, a proposed talk by Zeidman on the Protestant attitude toward birth control, expected to contain controversial religious material, was cancelled following a CBC suggestion. The following month a proposed broadcast on sterilization by Dr. Hutton of the

Eugenics Society of Canada was similarly axed. Toronto papers claimed the CBC decision stemmed from the influence on it of the Roman Catholic Church. When the issue rose in Parliament, M.P.'s requested a central board of censorship, unbiased and non-partisan, to impose universal Canadian standards of acceptability. C. D. Howe, then Minister of Transport, urged severe restrictions on programming to ensure that only inoffensive material would be sent through the airwaves.

In 1937 the CBC passed regulations prohibiting abusive comment on any religion, race, or creed and banned birth control as a subject inappropriate for broadcasting.<sup>78</sup> However, controversy was not dead on the CBC, it had merely been modified. While Zeidman and Lanphier no longer aired their religious feuds, there were still spirited commentaries offered by such individuals as Premier Aberhart of Alberta, newspaper editor W. L. McTavish, and George Ferguson, Managing Editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the last-named provoking parliamentary debate.<sup>79</sup>

In 1939, the CBC White Paper on controversial broadcasting advocated a Hyde Park on radio by pressing the need for equal opportunity of access and the avoidance of air-time sales for individual propaganda. Its principles were suspended during wartime but upheld when peace returned and the policy continues today.

### Radio and World War II

The advent of the war had drastic effects on radio programming. Both the United Kingdom and Canada attempted to present a united front of public opinion during the war by suspending the stress on the need for controversial broadcasting. During the early war years in Canada, radio censorship was more systematic than press censorship but was ineffective because of the easy reception of American broadcasts. With the U.S. entry into the war, radio information control became somewhat easier. While strict and occasionally irksome, Canadian censorship was not dictatorial, and sincere criticism of the government was permitted. Dramatic radio accounts and too-graphic voice descriptions of battle action and paratroop fighting brought new realization to Canadian listeners of the meaning of war. The experience of on-the-spot war reporting brought the details of dying soldiers into Canadian homes, evoking guilt among the listeners for their own lack of sacrifice in safeguarding the world from the conflict made so close by radio.<sup>80</sup> In Britain, Canada, and the United States, rules prohibiting misrepresentation or ridicule of, or attacks on races, colours, and nationalities, were suspended with regard to the nature of the wartime enemy. In both adults' and children's comedy, drama, and song, characters all participated in the war effort and spied on the German family down the block, or the Japanese restaurateur, bought bonds, worked in war-production factories and generally safeguarded their respective countries from an enemy described in the most despicable terms.

Also in 1939 a British decision was made which left censorship to the discretion of the BBC Director-General; news and political censorship was to be indirect, informal and voluntary based on liaison with the Press Division of the Ministry of Information. The BBC took public interest, intensified by the war, into account, and after conflict with the press, broadcast news bulletins throughout the day.<sup>81</sup> By 1941, the nation's interest apparently required tighter control of the mass media – a member of the Ministry of Food complained that there was nothing to talk about that would pass the censor except "oatmeal, carrots and potatoes"; even the health of the population was considered taboo though mention of health had been aired only in passing reference during a radio drama.<sup>82</sup> American radio censorship was also to be voluntary, but weather news, news of troop, ship or plane movements, war production, fortifications and casualties were banned. Abolition of man-on-the-street interviews and other ad-lib programs was urged.<sup>83</sup> Yet the aforementioned incidents of graphic battle descriptions on Canadian airwaves, paralleled in the U.S., would seem to indicate that paper regulations of program censorship were not strictly applied.

After the war, radio was to have a totally new function in North America as it adapted to increasing competition with television. Canada's radio system evolved still further in structure, licence fees were dropped and the Board of Broadcast Governors and later the Canadian Radio-Television Commission performed regulatory functions. Radio turned increasingly to a music format, often specializing to cater to particular tastes rather than general public interest. Its new inoffensive role as a background medium aroused little interest from regulatory bodies.<sup>84</sup>

### Violence and Radio: The Sound and The Fury

A very few instances of concern have been expressed regarding American, British, and Canadian censorship and control of radio broadcasting. As has been shown, the main topics which resulted in control were religion, politics, sex, radicalism, fraud . . . no mention has been made so far of violence. Except for an isolated 1928 incident in Britain in which a skit regarding a mob storming Lambeth Bridge panicked radio listeners and resulted in scoldings, editorials, and BBC apologies (but no official regulation), violence apparently did not spark attempts at control by official or partisan groups in the United Kingdom.<sup>85</sup> In Canada, comparatively little mention was made of violence on the radio. Only in the United States did the subject become a major area of concern.

Radio was sold with violence in mind even in the earliest days of broadcasting. *The New York Times* of July 17, 1927, claimed that the greatest event of that week would be the broadcast of the Dempsey-Sharkey fight, and predicted an audience greater than the

30,000,000 who had listened to the Charles Lindbergh celebrations. Peter Odegard, writing in *The American Public Mind*, used the incident as an example of the wonders which could be brought into the home via radio: "It is illegal to ship fight films in interstate commerce but the radio brings every battle of the century into the very homes of millions. Not only the male adults but the mothers and kiddies can now 'listen in' as the Manassa Mauler delivers a 'vicious left' to the Bull of the Pampas."<sup>86</sup> Radio violence has been available in sports programming, in news, and in fiction for almost fifty years. While initially radio was lauded for its ability to bring "live action" into the home, eventually the reaction to fictionalized violence became somewhat less enthusiastic.

Despite Robert E. Sherwood's 1929 pessimism over the success of radio drama,<sup>87</sup> during the 1930s to mid-1950s a host of serials, plays, and short narratives were sent into the radio ether for consumption by adult and child alike. Entertainment formulas, though stale and crassly commercial, won for radio "a loyalty that was almost irrational." Destitute families, forced to surrender icebox or furniture, still clung to their radios as a last link with humanity.<sup>88</sup> This attitude prevailed until the advent of television. A survey conducted in the late 1940s continued to indicate that men and women would be "lost," "ruined," "bored," or "lonely" without their electric companions.<sup>89</sup> Infatuation with radio even surfaced as grounds for divorce.<sup>90</sup> The vicarious gratification derived from escape into the fantasy heroes and heroines (be they soap or sadistic) made life more comfortable, livable, and bearable.

While advertising continued to boost sales, especially of drugs and packaged foods, this commercial incentive of supplying demand resulted in a proliferation of daytime radio drama serials – soap operas. Prime-time night and evening programming was aimed at the family market and consisted of music, mystery, and half-hour comedy-variety selections with permanent casts and such recurrent themes as Jack Benny's stinginess, Fibber McGee and Molly's overflowing closet, and the Hope-Crosby "feud."<sup>91</sup> However, it is in the realm of mystery and children's drama that we discover concern for violence in radio programming, for these programs primarily offered gory thrills.

The irrepressible Canadian poet, Alden Nowlan, reminisced about the days when radio was an enchanted instrument, like the talking harp that Jack brought back from the top of the beanstalk . . . even its most mediocre shows had a dream-like quality. The imagination was free to create forms far more realistic than those that appear on the television screen . . . radio has never been equalled as a means of communicating the fantastic and the macabre. On film or videotape, monsters are essentially comic. On *Inner Sanctum* and *Suspense* they were as real as their counterparts in the depths of the unconscious mind.<sup>92</sup>

Sexual themes and birth-control discussions had been taboo with radio broadcasters since the days of Olga

Petrova. Even in the soapy sex lives of serials for housewives such insinuations were veiled. Social critic Gershon Legman has suggested that violence and death "save" the media from sex. Radio too, chose instead to air "blood and guts" programming in serial format, and from the early 1930s, trickling into the 1950s, "radio blather scream[ed] before supper every day, with one or another grisly flaming horror left impending at the end of every chapter." Erik Barnouw's *Handbook of Radio Writing*, published in 1939 when he was an instructor in this field at Columbia University, made a special effort to caution ambitious scenarists about "taboo notes on the open market." While conjugal housekeeping arrangements without benefit of clergy were strictly prohibited, even as a bad example, Barnouw noted that murder and arson constituted admissible material. His explanation for this apparent contradiction was somewhat different from that of Legman. The general taboo on sex matters, he explained, was enforced in deference to radio's role as the new world's "hearthside." He does not explain the term further, but the implication is there that radio violence must have been more cosy and congenial than radio sex. While murder and arson were suitable for broadcasting, authors were warned that topics of nightmarish crimes, e.g. kidnapping, might not be admissible and dramatized scenes of suicide might also be unacceptable on certain stations or programs, as depressed listeners might be induced to do likewise. Barnouw suggested that plots on children's programs should be on the side of law, justice, and virtue, but cautioned against overwrought depiction of fear and persecution. All fiction writing, he claimed, was somewhat sadistic in order to evoke audience concern about the characters, but the degree of sadism had to be tempered to the audience. The line between enjoyable apprehension and unhealthy terror he left for child psychologists to determine.<sup>93</sup> Networks and sponsors seemed to follow Barnouw's rationale for violence in radio programming. They believed that audience sympathies were maintained by keeping heroes and heroines in constant danger; as long as this notion sold cereal and soap, "blood and thunder" was resident on radio.

The Child's Garden of Violence included such illustrious heroes as Jack Packard, a chauvinistic misogynist who "was man enough to take on an ax murderer barehanded, cut out the killer's heart with his own ax, and hand it to him," and who led his cronies through many international adventures.<sup>94</sup> In "The Battle of the Century," a rescue attempt was staged with superb attention to directional detail:

Doc: Here they come, Jack . . .

Jack: Watch out, Doc . . .

Sound: (sound of confusion of struggle . . . exclamations heavy breathing and a rain of socks and punches until the hand of every sound man at MBS aches like the toothache and is swollen twice its size. On cue, struggle fades back a little)

Doc: (breathless, chuckles) How we a-doin', Jack?

Jack: (gasp) Save your breath for fighting . . .

Doc: You betcha! (grunts) Honest to . . . (grunts) grandma . . . (grunts) I don't know . . . (grunts) when I've had so much fun!<sup>95</sup>

*Tom Mix, Terry and the Pirates, Sky King, Superman, Captain Midnight, Green Hornet . . .* all had their faithful followers. Children rooted daily for their favourite heroes and heroines, the cliff-hanging format ensured that they would "tune in tomorrow, same time, same station." Sponsors even intimidated their youthful audiences into believing their right to listen was invalid unless their parents bought the sponsor's product. As a check on their promotional effectiveness, sponsors requested listeners to send in box tops, etc. and offered "free gifts" from the idols in return.<sup>96</sup> While strict homage was paid to the triumph of good over evil, the means employed to achieve such moral ends were not exactly accepted social practice, and generally involved some form of extreme violence.

The adult mystery shows, broadcast later at night, and of longer duration, intensified the juvenile horror of late afternoon. Children listened nonetheless – overtly, with the rest of the family, or covertly, ear pressed to the spare bedroom set. In response to pressure from parents, networks would promise to "clean up" the children's hours and broadcast adult horror later at night. Attempts were not made to adjust for time-zone changes, however, so that east-coast network promises were invalid in the west.

The "evil that lurks in the hearts of men" surfaced weekly to challenge the Shadow's powers of mental perception and the audience tolerance for terror. His trusty "friend and companion," Margo Lane, an inept masochist who trailed Lamont Cranston through each episode, was menaced, tortured, bound, and assaulted for the twenty-three years of the program's life. In one of the duo's escapades, she is tortured (for kicks) by a ghost:

Edward: In the days of the Puritans they had a very satisfactory method for dealing with meddlers . . . they branded them upon the forehead . . .

Margo: No . . . no . . .

Edward: Soon, young lady, soon you shall feel the searing agony of that brand biting into your flesh!

Margo: You're mad . . . you're mad!

Edward: (Laughing) You won't feel the pain too long . . . no . . . you see, after you are branded I have another treat for you . . . the press . . . the torture press!

Margo: You let me out of here!

Edward: The branding iron is glowing now . . . it is ready to use!

Margo: You can't do this . . . please!

Edward: (Laughing) Prepare yourself . . . prepare yourself, Miss Lane . . . I have the iron ready now . . .

Margo: Keep it away from me . . . (scream) Keep it away!<sup>97</sup>

Naturally, when each audience hair stood on end, the

Shadow entered the scene, calmly demanding that the "girl" be unhandled, the branding iron fell to the floor with a clatter and a collective sigh of relief was breathed in front of mahogany consoles across Canada and the U.S. The Shadow's enemies and Margo's tormentors inevitably died hard. One criminal met his end by the kiss of a jackdaw with a cyanide-tipped beak, another as a meal for a Great Dane. But the Shadow never killed anyone himself; perilous circumstances always ensured that justice prevailed.

The popular show, *Gangbusters*, was based on FBI files with the "Feds" as heroes, until J. Edgar Hoover expressed displeasure over emphasis on excessive gunplay rather than patient police work. Philip Lord, the creator, merely identified his characters as city police and continued to assail the audience with an avalanche of SMACK! groan! Boffo! SMASH! Aaarrhhh! and Rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat! – a tried and true formula for audience fascination. As an added lure, *Gangbusters* offered nationally broadcast clues to aid in the capture of bloodthirsty criminals "who more than likely you would encounter sometime during the coming week."<sup>98</sup>

Herman Brown, sound-effects man for *Inner Sanctum*, perfected body bashing by devising a bludgeon with which to strike a small melon. A juicy, hollow, squishy sound resulted, evoking the proper amount of revulsion for the Sanctum's murderous deeds. *Sherlock Holmes*, *The Fat Man*, *Ellery Queen*, *Front Page Farrell*, *Casey, Crime Photographer*, *Sam Spade*, *Charlie Chan* all had their slot in the radio crypt. Besides these full-time professional death stalkers, amateur sleuths abounded – even the soaps were not immune to the murder malady; Ma Perkins was a part time crime-tracker.<sup>99</sup>

*Baby Snooks*, an illustrious *enfant terrible*, "was pretty fearsome . . . the whole menage – Fanny Brice as Baby Snooks, Hanley Stafford as Daddy, and the unheard baby brother, Robespierre – had a sadistic streak. Baby Snooks would execute some torture on Robespierre – boiling him in his bottle sterilizer, maybe – and then Daddy would painfully worm the truth out of her. The sign-off was Baby Snooks bawling at the top of Fanny Brice's lungs as Daddy walloped her from here to Tuesday."<sup>100</sup> Parental child molestation must have been more easily tolerated over the ether than out of the tube.

Violence obviously ran rampant in radio – a lurid, lamentable fascination with the pain and panic of macabre murder and crime was available on all networks, and 41 per cent of those surveyed by Lazarsfeld in 1948 cited mystery programs as their evening listening preference.<sup>101</sup> In his usual colourful style, Gershon Legman metaphorically screamed for attention to be paid to the content of the ether: "Does anyone find anything unwholesome in radio 'entertainment' – the soap-, crime-, and horse-operas – goosing Gothic masochism into mama in the morning (or she cannot work), titillating frustrated papa with

horror until midnight (or he cannot sleep), dinning lynch law into little Junior before supper (or he will not eat). Perversion as incentive, soporific, digestive!"<sup>102</sup> Writing in 1949, he was about 16 years too late in asking his question, and a few years too early to arrive at an answer.

Pleas were occasionally voiced for radio critics to perform an adversary role with regard to tawdry commercial programming in the 1930s and 1940s but the pleas remained basically unanswered.<sup>103</sup> A *Variety* survey done in January 1946 found only 13 American radio editors offering regular constructive criticism; some papers actually forbade radio columns.<sup>104</sup> In 1966, Lawrence Laurent, a critic for the *Washington Post*, claimed that no relationship had ever been established between favourable (or even unfavourable) reviews, and the success of a television series.<sup>105</sup>

Criticism of the glorification of violence and crime in children's radio dramas began in 1933, soon after their initial airing. Early that year, the Parent-Teachers Association of Fox Meadow School in Scarsdale, New York, surveyed mothers' and children's preferences regarding quality in juvenile radio programs. The mothers objected to 35 of 40 offerings because of concern that children's speech would be composed of bad grammar and the children's nerves would be "shattered," resulting in nightmares of horror. The Scarsdale group also discovered that programs rated most objectionable by parental standards were most favoured by the kids.<sup>106</sup>

Following the February, 1933, McMath kidnapping which closely paralleled an *Eno Crime Club* scenario, New York City Police Commissioner James Bolan, postulated that aerial crime yarns were liable to give dangerous ideas to young America.<sup>107</sup> Similar opinions were offered in PTA meetings, child study groups, and suburban living-rooms – the periodical press became a forum of debate on the possibly detrimental effects that injection of intrigue and suspense might have on young psyches. Implicit in objections to sex and violence via screen or ether is the fear that viewer or auditor would imitate the objectionable example. Robert Davis's study of the periodical press revealed that charges connecting radio programs to juvenile violence were uncommon before World War II; only occasionally did parents complain about the influence of radio as a factor in their children's behaviour.<sup>108</sup> Empirical research was scanty and uncertainty existed then, as now, about the actual influence of aerial crime waves on listeners. While agreement was widespread that radio violence was probably not beneficial to its listeners, others supported the view that listening to violence could have a cathartic effect, thereby reducing violent behaviour.<sup>109</sup>

In Robert J. Landry's 1946 book, *This Fascinating Radio Business*, he reports a study done several years earlier which found no unanimity of attitude to any one radio program or custom. Some parents surveyed claimed too much stress had been placed on gangsters,

others pressed for likable villains; some boycotted the products of those who sponsored aerial "blood and thunder," others merely spoke of the nuisance of children writing to advertisers about their give-aways; some appreciated the radio as a baby-sitter, others felt kids should be playing outdoors. Debate on the worth of children's radio programming was to rage for years. On the one side were broadcasters and advertisers, with considerable support from educators, who believed that radio (1) expanded the understanding of children, (2) quickened their perceptions, (3) familiarized them with current events, (4) sharpened their powers of attention at an early age, (5) generally improved speech and vocabulary, (6) excited an interest in foreign places. In opposition to these optimists, were those who claimed that: (1) programs frightened, upset, and over-excited children; (2) they caused nightmares; (3) they encouraged children to parrot silly and stupid catch phrases [parents apparently did not consider their own use of "wanna buy a duck?" and "voss you dere, Sharlie?" as objectionable]; (4) radio's commercial sponsorship converted children into nags who tried to influence their parents' shopping.<sup>110</sup> Landry's survey made no mention of crime program incentive for juvenile delinquency, seemingly following Davis's pre-war pattern, when parents were more concerned with individual internal psychological effects, rather than possible wide-scale social pathology.

In response to protests by parents and teachers, broadcasters promised such children's classics as *Treasure Island*, *Robin Hood*, *The Three Musketeers*, and initiated a new boys' serial, based on the illustrious life of Tom Mix, film star, cowboy, soldier, and U.S. Marshal<sup>111</sup> – all of which appear to have been as concerned with violence as the programs they replaced. As historical offerings, however, their remote violence may have been more acceptable. This pattern has been evident in the film industry and historical merit has been similarly employed to justify early blood and gore on television westerns.<sup>112</sup> Nigel Bruce, who played Dr. Watson on the radio, claimed that old-fashioned stories were a great tonic in times of stress. He explained the popularity of *Sherlock Holmes* during the Second World War as an escape device from the all-pervasive horrors of battle in Britain; the problems of a long-ago Scotland Yard were more easily faced than the then current strife.<sup>113</sup>

General broadcasting criticism was almost non-existent during the 1930s but the anti-crime war directed at children's programming continued to rage through 1934, largely owing to various organizations which were specifically founded to pressure broadcasters into program improvement. In September that year, 10,000,000 members of the Women's National Radio Committee began lobbying to clean up the airwaves. Using the subtle, but commercially painful, means of threatened boycott rather than Carrie Nation tactics, the WNRC succeeded, via the FCC in chasing a contra-

ceptive jelly program off the air and expressed similar distaste regarding laxative and feminine hygiene advertisements. CBS complied in 1935, by cutting commercial announcements to ten percent of broadcast periods, deleting sponsors' blackmail pleas to buy products, avoiding excessively rapid speech and poor diction when depicting radio characters, and dropping advertising accounts involving "unpleasant discussions of bodily functions."<sup>114</sup>

The WNRC lauded the CBS move of July 1935, in hiring a consultant child psychologist to filter "sensational hocus pocus" from juvenile scenarios and replace it with "useful knowledge," though general comedy and excitement would remain to avoid pedantry. After listening to widespread official and amateur criticism, NBC scheduled five new programs (in addition to its ten hours per week of children's offerings) to serve as "psychological models."<sup>115</sup> When the WNRC petitioned the National Association of Broadcasters in 1935, they requested a constant supply of such "model programs" from 5 to 8 o'clock daily – as with television some years later, the radio must have also served as an electric babysitter.<sup>116</sup>

Robert E. Davis suggested that network response in program modification placated the critics until the attack was renewed in 1937, with a third wave occurring in 1945.<sup>117</sup> Maurice Shelby's 1970 study employed an index measuring intensity of criticism, and discovered that criticism was largely negative from 1933-1942 with peaks occurring in 1935 and 1939. Fully 93 percent of all negative criticism of children's programming was aimed at adventure programs, principally at adventure serials. Thirty per cent of the criticism was directed at specific programs, most based on program ratings supplied by such organized groups as the United Parents Association; seven per cent acknowledged that some fare was "bad" but claimed parental control over listening was the answer to the issue; 51 per cent treated a variety of topics, none of which occupied more than three per cent of the total amount of criticism devoted to children's programming. Themes such as those delineated by Landry emerged: too much radio listening promoted passivity; unorthodox methods of persuasion in commercials were immoral; greater creativity was needed in the production of children's programs; use of poor English debased language development; anti-social conduct was promoted by some programs, and adventure programs cultivated juvenile delinquency. The view that too much violence was detrimental to children apparently clustered in 1935, 1939, and 1945, but only 12 per cent of the criticism between 1933 and 1948 expressed the concern that violence on radio programs, was unhealthy for children.<sup>118</sup>

Apparently the 12 per cent evident in the periodical press represented only the tip of the proverbial iceberg – late in 1938, George Payne, Federal Communications Commissioner, after stating that children's

programming should be cleaned up and their nightmares ended, announced he was "swamped" with the largest amount of mail he had ever received on a controversial subject.<sup>119</sup> Veiled threats by FCC Chairman Prall in 1935, and later in 1938 by Chairman Payne, were never officially carried out. In 1939 the FCC did, however, release a memorandum to broadcasters enumerating "undesirable" programs depicting "torture" and "excessive suspense" in children's fare,<sup>120</sup> and the revised self-regulating Code that the National Association of Broadcasters adopted that year pledged the removal of overly-stimulating material from children's programming.<sup>121</sup> Federal regulation of programming had been successfully circumvented again.

NBC and CBS drastically reduced and laundered their children's programming after 1939 (causing youngsters to switch to adult horror instead), but ABC and Mutual continued to air serialized and non-serialized adventures throughout the 1940s. After a lull in media criticism generally during the war years, the vituperative attack on radio renewed itself, as the amount of time devoted to children's adventure drama increased in the post-war period.<sup>122</sup> Social critics sought an explanation for the rising tide of juvenile delinquency, and radio's emphasis on crime and violence was again subjected to scrutiny.<sup>123</sup> Once more pleas were heard for the development of alternatives to juvenile "blood and thunder" melodramas, and the illogicality of stressing "crime does not pay" with murderous how-to's was repeated time and again.<sup>124</sup> ABC and Mutual aired their violence at the same time and there was some suggestion that these networks competed for the audience by piling horror on horror.<sup>125</sup> Gilbert Seldes, writing in 1950, estimates that some 1,500 murders took place each week on the air. These figures did not include the murders meditated or suspected in the daytime soaps, but only the manslaughter specially arranged for children's programs.<sup>126</sup> Albert Williams, writing in *Saturday Review*, noted that almost no choice existed in children's programming, as mostly adventure dramas were offered, which, in turn, caused kids to switch to the greater variety of adult fare. Robert Landry claimed an advertising aphorism was in existence during the 1930s and 1940s that children were allergic to kid's programs, and also stated that children preferred adult programs.<sup>127</sup>

It is typical of pressure groups to be concerned with the youth of a society, because young malleable minds are still subject to corrupting influences.<sup>128</sup> It is interesting that the late-night exercises in slippings, muggings, shootings, murders, and tortures, essentially aired as adult entertainment, apparently evinced no concern about any possible negative influence which they might have on the more "mature" elements of North American culture. Yet the greatest hoax in the world (even greater because it was not planned as a hoax) – the 1938 broadcast of Orson Welles's *Mercury*

Theatre production of *The War of the Worlds* – exquisitely illuminated the incredible gullibility, vulnerability and general unconsciousness of adult American radio listeners. The incident caused such embarrassment and mass hysteria that three years later many listeners refused to believe reports of the Pearl Harbour bombing; “they simply winked knowingly and waited for the commercial.”<sup>129</sup> One might have expected that the audience reactions to the broadcast would have sparked a wave of indignation regarding the imitative effects of radio thrillers on adults, but all it created in the U.S. was a renewed battle regarding public versus private control of radio.

Canadian reaction to the broadcast paralleled the American attitude. *The Globe and Mail* found the broadcast “regrettable,” and expressed alarm at radio’s potential for enemy propaganda if unregulated. Though only one private Toronto station carried the broadcast, *The War of the Worlds* was heard by many Canadians who received it directly from American stations. Reactions were mixed: Jerry Shea, manager of Shea’s Hippodrome, said “they should all be arrested for allowing such a broadcast,” A. J. Anderson, an M.P. for High Park, termed it “the next thing to sacrilege,” Toronto Mayor Ralph Day and Controller J. D. McNigh hesitatingly suggested that frightening horror programs might be censored or eliminated, others claimed it was a cheap publicity stunt. The expressed concern was vaguely directed more toward the hoax and its political implications than to the audience effects.<sup>130</sup> Journalist Dorothy Thompson used the Welles broadcast as an argument against government monopoly control of radio; as evidence that popular universal education was failing to train reason and logic in those educated; as proof that the popularization of radio was not an information tool promoting citizen scepticism, but rather led to mass gullibility; and as evidence of the power of mass suggestion cautioning against its use for the creation of mass prejudices. But no mention was made of the effects of horror and violence upon the audience.<sup>131</sup> The issue of social control was essentially divorced from the issue of specific content.

A 1948 survey indicated that 15 per cent of the radio audience singled out mystery and crime programs for criticism, a number exceeded only by those critical of radio’s commercialism. Almost ten years after the radio industry had promised to clean up its airwaves, adults were still complaining that the plethora of gory “who-dun-its” were bad or too exciting for children, while citing them high on their own list of favourite programs.<sup>132</sup> As Legman inferred above, no one lamented papa’s prurient interests – only when Junior was unmasked as a nailbiter was concern expressed over deleterious social effects. Albert Williams urged communities to pass civic ordinances if they could prove that crime and horror programs impeded the preservation of law and order. He pointed out “the ease

with which zealous citizens in hinterland cities could pass ordinances and what a flood of restrictions just one ordinance would generate throughout the entire country.”<sup>133</sup> However, concern expressed by parents, teachers, and psychologists, and the suggestions for action supplied by those such as Williams, never materialized in legislative form.

Criticism of radio violence virtually expired in 1948, except for a few isolated incidents.<sup>134</sup> Though several serials still continued, attention shifted and television was now identified as the new causal factor in juvenile delinquency. Fifteen years of nagging complaints from parents, teachers, and child welfare organizations, countered by false promises from networks and advertisers, had ended, unresolved, and the same arguments were now transferred to “blood and thunder” on the home screen. In a scathing editorial written for *The Saturday Review*, Norman Cousins complained about television programming, citing horrendous acts committed in imitation of television stories. He decried misuse of the entertainment medium and exploitation of the receptive trusting audience via violent programming and over-commercialization. He expressed disappointment at the lack of utilization of television’s potential for creative entertainment and noted that for every worthwhile offering on the screen there was much garbage to watch. Cousins complained about the gross perpetuation of the myth that the average American’s intelligence level was that of a 12-year-old, as reflected in the programming fare, and noted that such underestimation had already hurt movies, radio and some pulp magazines. He further pointed out that parental enjoyment of violent television implied a sanction of the actions shown, causing discrepancy in children’s minds.<sup>135</sup> All were arguments previously employed against radio. According to a 1947 *Variety* survey, little real content change occurred in children’s radio serials between 1933 and 1947.<sup>136</sup> Shelby concurs. No significant correlation was found in his study between amount of negative criticism and time devoted to children’s radio adventure melodramas.<sup>137</sup>

Amidst the vociferous cries for a shut-down of shoot-outs on the radio, many calm, rational, rights-conscious individuals had also managed to express their views. Mrs. Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg, director of the Child Study Association of America, an organization concerned with research in child welfare, termed much of the protest “hysterical.” She pointed out that the negative approach of imposed partisan preference was unproductive, and not an ethical improvement over the situation to which angry parents objected. The adage that “alarm is always more articulate than approval” was tossed into the forum – parental disapproval of existing programs was vocal; little response was elicited when approved programs were deleted from the schedule.<sup>138</sup> The psychologist Josette Frank extolled the escape function of serial dramas. She claimed children could find no adventure on city or suburban streets, in

communities hedged with restrictions, in shrinking homes, ill-planned playgrounds and school routine. With radio, children could live dangerously yet remain within the secure frame of their homes, a radio function which she considered quite vital in middle class American childhood.<sup>139</sup>

Valid, reliable, and thorough social scientific research on the effects of crime program listening on children was rare until a 1949 doctoral dissertation by Edward Ricciuti.<sup>140</sup> His review of the literature indicated that psychological research into the effects of habitual radio listening on audiences was virtually non-existent. Human research obviously had not kept pace with radio's technical advancements. Ricciuti noted that interest in children's reactions to radio programs had been generated in 1931 by the advent of specifically child-oriented broadcasts. The Scarsdale study of 1933, mentioned above, was the first to receive wide public notice, but it and later studies were concerned with analysis or collection of data on listening habits, program patterns, attitudes toward broadcasts, opinions of parents and teachers on the state of the broadcasting art or research into the effectiveness of commercials. Mothers' opinions and isolated incidents were touted as indicative of the possible pathology produced by habitual listening to crime and adventure programs.

Ricciuti observed that broadcasters had accepted such evidence and reacted by modifying their programming without certainty as to the existence of relationships between habitual listening to specific types of radio programs and the attitudes and behaviours of children. However, as indicated above, only NBC and CBS had altered their children's fare in response to public, if not social scientific, demand, and all networks continued to air adult crime and mystery shows.

In his research, Ricciuti studied listening habits of 3,125 public school pupils in the fifth to eighth grades. Over 90 per cent of the children studied indicated that they listened to comedy-variety and to crime drama programs; Ricciuti interpreted this finding as largely due to the high availability of these genres, and claimed the high percentage reflected children's need for the tension-releasing experiences of radio programs which supplied light entertainment and humour, and the tension-creating experiences offered by crime drama programs. He discovered that children were less interested in exciting programs with an openly expressed "crime does not pay" approach than they were in straight murder-mystery drama, an attitude Ricciuti considered comparable to the popularity of mystery stories among adults. Anti-crime, crime-drama, daily adventure, modern music and soap-opera programs, while not contributing anything positive to their listeners, were not found to be harmful to children in general. Contrary to the contentions of some parents, child study organizations, and M. I. Preston (see below), no significant differences were found between listeners and non-listeners to crime-drama, anti-crime drama,

and daily adventure serials on measures of nervous habits, fears, and daydreaming. He did conclude that different radio programs had different meanings for children of varying ages and suggested that parental guidance in radio listening was essential.

Azriel Eisenberg's painstaking and comprehensive research of 1935 involved data collection from children who reported their thinking regarding the influence of radio on their dreams, behaviour, scholastic achievement, general knowledge, character, and personality development. On the basis of the youths' reports, the beneficial effects of radio outweighed by far the harmful effect.<sup>141</sup>

M. I. Preston conducted a 1941 study which discovered that nervousness, generalized fears, fears of kidnapping, sleeping disturbances, eating disturbances, nailbiting, callousness, daydreaming in school, and sex interest were more prevalent among movie horror and radio crime addicts than among non-addicts, and suggested parental control, restriction of frequency of indulgence, elimination of crime and horror stories, and substitution of suitable recreational and social pastimes as treatment for those adversely afflicted by their addiction.<sup>142</sup> Ricciuti, whose findings conflicted with those of Preston, criticized her work as being based on a biased sample. (Preston's subjects were children who had sought private or clinical care.) He further charged that Preston had a preconception of detrimental results in her subjects from listening to and watching horror and crime stories, an attitude reflected in her report. Like Ricciuti, Florence Heisler in 1948 also failed to find significant academic or personality differences between movie, comic book and radio serial addicts, and those who never or seldom indulged.<sup>143</sup>

Josette Frank, in a 1948 review article of psychiatric opinion, reported generally favourable attitudes toward radio adventure programs among the psychiatrists surveyed, though Dr. Augusta Alpert admitted concern about the cumulative effect of the threefold bombardment of children's minds by violence in radio, the movies, and comics. Dr. Simon Tulchin cautioned against weighing the effects of thrillers in terms of an adult viewpoint rather than a child's reactions: while an adult views violence in a meaningful context, the child's lack of experience does not allow him/her to attach meaning to violent events. Dr. Reginald Laurie noted that when children had engaged in competitive and exciting play of their own fewer of them listened to the radio, thereby supporting the aforementioned hypothesis that adventure, crime, and horror programs filled vicarious needs; when these needs were satisfied children no longer listened to blood and thunder.<sup>144</sup> Recurring comments such as these, combined with the undeniable commercial appeal of the thrillers, probably explain the impotence of pressure group protests in America regarding "blood and guts" on the radio.

A relative lack of specific Canadian criticism of radio violence existed during this period of heavy American

censure, which can only be somewhat arbitrarily explained. Lack of exposure to the crime programs was probably not a factor in the comparative absence of critical complaint – a 1938 survey of high school students indicated that 93 per cent listened to American programs, with their favourites in the comedy/variety field. More than half listened “habitually” to radio stories of American crime.<sup>145</sup> Similarly, a poll taken of an adult Toronto sample by *The Canadian Forum*, showed that 90 per cent had radios, of whom 80 per cent actually preferred American programming to Canadian, and the drama category was most favoured.<sup>146</sup> The U.S. network features held “great interest for Canadian listeners, particularly at night.”<sup>147</sup> At the 1935 Conference on Canadian-American Affairs, Graham Spry summed up Canadian affinity for imported entertainment: “The radio audience of North America is North American, but the performance is American; the audience listens not to North America, but to the United States.”<sup>148</sup> Paul Lazarsfeld found that 41 per cent of his study group preferred mystery in the U.S. Since American adult airwaves also served large helpings of “blood and gore,” it therefore seems likely that the flow of the signals across the border allowed both Canadians and Americans to indulge in the chiller thrillers, or at least offered the audience the opportunity for exposure to this type of material.<sup>149</sup>

Major William Borrett, director of a Halifax radio station during the 1930s, viewed the influx of American broadcasting as of positive value in promoting international friendliness and understanding, qualities noticeably, but not seriously, impaired through irritation at obsessive American commercialism and chauvinism. According to Borrett, Canadians felt “too grateful for the splendour of the musical entertainment to complain of its setting in tooth-paste advertisements.” The proliferation of “gangster” and “hold-up” radio pieces apparently produced in the Maritimes “disgust and a touch of contempt” for American life and institutions.<sup>150</sup> No mention was made of damage resulting to listeners of “gangster” and “hold-up” programs, though such evidence of motion picture influences is widely cited in the Canadian context. Canadian moral opposition to radio was far less marked than opposition to motion pictures; the appeal of nationalism was much stronger.<sup>151</sup>

A search of standard periodical indexes, the index to the Parliamentary debates, and the *New York Times* index for the period in which American opposition to violence in radio drama strongly evidenced itself, failed to elicit a similar public outcry in Canada. Even Sergeant Renfrew, that illustrious movie example of Canadian justice, shining in his noble red Mountie uniform, was not terribly upset about the preponderance of violent radio serials on the radio air. In *Renfrew of the Northwest Mounted* (1937), he stood outside a cabin and heard a tremendous commotion inside; the cabin door was artlessly bashed in and

Renfrew leaped to the rescue. Upon finding a fellow officer listening to a crime serial on the radio, his rescue attempt thwarted, Renfrew merely shrugged and commented that there was nothing like a little radio violence for excitement. Such organizations as the Montreal Kiwanis Club did adopt resolutions connecting violent radio thrillers to juvenile delinquency and petitioned the 1944 Radio Committee for removal of this perceived social threat, but no legislative action resulted.<sup>152</sup>

During the aforementioned 1935 conference on Canadian-American Affairs held at the height of the American protests against radio violence and crime from various pressure groups, discussion concentrated on variances between the defunct FRC and the failing CRBC, especially regarding freedom of opinion in controversial matters. As Angus pointed out, the perceived threat to cultural nationalism was an important issue in Canadian radio opinion, as was a lengthy preoccupation with public versus private ownership systems, commercial versus sustaining programming, ongoing concerns regarding reception, licensing, controversial political and religious broadcasting, news censorship, and, of course, CRBC and CBC expenditure on programming. Perhaps, noting the futility of American lobbyists on the issue, Canadians recognized that international criticism of the offending programming could have little more success than did such protests to networks and advertisers from their neighbours to the south.

Canadian legal control over broadcasting included investiture in the CBC of the power to control the character of any and all programs broadcast by it or by private stations; but it had, of course, no control over the infiltration of the airwaves by American broadcasting.<sup>153</sup> A 1937 CBC regulation prohibited the broadcasting of anything contrary to the law – presumably a legal wizard could have prosecuted those responsible for airing any programs even remotely advocating murder . . . but no such attempt was ever made.

During the 1944 proceedings of the parliamentary Radio Broadcasting Committee, the topic of radio violence emerged. When told that a Montreal Kiwanis Club had submitted a petition to the CBC regarding their displeasure at the number of crime serials and horror shows on the air, Auguste Frigon, CBC General Manager, agreed that the problem was a topic of CBC concern. He spoke of a committee composed of CBC members, advertisers and private broadcasters, newly formed to study the issue and hastened to point out that the CBC did not carry the broadcasts in question.<sup>154</sup> Frigon later suggested that private Canadian radio stations eliminate crime and horror shows from their broadcast schedules, but official regulations were never made.<sup>155</sup>

While debating a Criminal Code amendment in 1954, M.P.s Hansell and Zaplitny offered suggestions to include radio and television in Section 150-151 of the

Code as media of publication whose program content could then be prosecuted when found to corrupt public morals.<sup>156</sup> Crime comics were banned and the comment was made that radio and television also depicted crimes, and should therefore be subject to the same law. The comments appear to have been isolated and did not draw debate from the other Honourable Members. This aberrant incident would appear, from the index to the debates, to have been the only case where radio's transmission of crime stories drew House of Commons disapproval; the disapproval did not appear to have been taken seriously.

As mentioned above, it is logical for pressure groups to be concerned with mass media effects on the young, but it is surprising that more research was not done on adult reactions to radio content. Pressure-group reactions to soap opera programs almost paralleled that of radio violence and were similarly unsuccessful in attempts at legislative control.

Dr. Louis Berg, a New York writer and psychiatrist, began a crusade against radio soap operas in 1941. He considered serials dangerous to middle-aged women, adolescents, and neurotics because they furnished "the same release for the emotionally distorted that is supplied to those who derive satisfaction from a lynching bee, who lick their lips at the salacious scandals of a *crime passionel*, who in the unregretted past cried out in ecstasy at a witch burning."<sup>157</sup> Berg claimed physiological damage resulted from listening to the daytime serial: rising blood pressure, vasomotor instability, profuse perspiration, nightmares, tachycardia and gastro-intestinal disturbances.<sup>158</sup> Others complained that the serials fed housewife insecurity by supplying simplistic moral solutions to problems, or lauded them for supplying "borrowed experience," thereby making the housewife's lot less dreary and serving two functions: escape, and a source of guidance in their daily lives.<sup>159</sup> Some groups suggested that the soaps were unwholesome because they dealt with murder, insanity, medical operations, jealousy . . .<sup>160</sup>

In March 1940, Westchester women's clubs reported that their "I'm not listening" campaign, a boycott of objectionable, demeaning radio soap operas and cliffhangers, had spread to 39 states. At a luncheon with radio executives, the women were told that audiences would not enjoy programs of a higher quality and as long as the soap operas profitably peddled their product, they would continue to be aired.<sup>161</sup> In 1946, the FCC suggested that broadcasters should cease "piling up" soap operas during the morning, resulting in a counter-attack from the NAB regarding attempted imposition of control and hindrance of freedom of speech.<sup>162</sup>

The soaps were criticized for ignoring larger social problems, emphasizing instead more personal aspects of life. As with the crime serials, networks responded by injecting some social realism into the story: when crime-show bad guys became wartime enemies, soap plots

involved war bond sales, and race relations were treated in their scenarios as a means of easing tensions in the army. Campaigns were launched against drug abuse and VD, and advocated pap smears; heroine Stella Dallas even began working in a munitions factory.<sup>163</sup> While crime and horror programs subsisted on variations of one theme, the chase,<sup>164</sup> soap operas revolved around five domestic issues<sup>165</sup> and one major plot: getting the characters out of a long series of "troubles."<sup>166</sup> Frankel commented that crime-story heroes were invariably ordinary individuals with rough edges, stamina, and hearts of gold; villains were sophisticated, educated, spoke precisely and fluently; he inferred a dilemma for children's character identification.<sup>167</sup>

Soap-opera goodies and baddies might be similarly reduced to a dilemma-inducing situation. The soaps had three basic characters: the weak, the good and strong, and the villain; the latter two fought over the weak one and determined his/her fate. The philosophical orientation of the plots flattered and thereby reinforced the prejudices of the audiences. Men were discriminated against: twice as often as women, men were the source of other people's problems. Difficult situations were frequently resolved by women who were more competent than the men who were supposed to do the particular job. A middle-class flavour prevailed in the radio soaps: rich people were belittled and saved from their ineptitude by a common middle-class individual; labourers were practically non-existent.

Paul Lazarsfeld nonetheless considered these radio stereotypes an improvement over those in motion pictures; he claimed the latter dealt mainly with the wealthy, whose experiences were far removed from that of ordinary men and women. He reported in his study with Herta Herzog that no evidence existed to substantiate claims that radio serials made women less responsible citizens and led them into emotional difficulties.<sup>168</sup>

The Women's Institute of Audience Reactions surveyed housewives and reported that the serials made work seem lighter; they provided guidance and inspiration; they also supplanted reading, thereby saving eyes and time; they provided an escape from personal troubles; created anticipation and suspense in routine lives; satisfied an appetite for entertainment; and finally, and by no means less importantly, they dispelled loneliness. Over 20,000,000 women were found to listen to radio serials daily. Louis Berg discounted the advantages cited by such listeners and compared housewife anxiety, which he claimed was induced by the soaps, to that produced by enemy propaganda. He believed this parallel could lay the ground for civilian panic in emergencies and would sap the productive energies of afflicted individuals in all their essential efforts. Like Lazarsfeld, however, NBC psychiatrists did not discover pathology in those who listened to radio soap operas.<sup>169</sup>

While parents waved banners against their children's radio fare, their own favourite daytime serials were also

a subject of unresolved controversy regarding listener ill effect and night-time horror remained unconsidered in this regard. This inconsistency never emerged outside Legman's lamentations, though it should have been evident.

As late as 1950, isolated incidents cropped up of complaint against media violence in radio, though these usually involved conjunct disapproval of television fare. Jack Gould of *The New York Times* complained that both radio and television had used murder, mayhem, and assorted felonies to inexpensively fill their summer replacement schedules.<sup>170</sup> While not expecting or demanding a ban of mystery shows he did feel "a lurid tale about a two-timing wife and her husband who was beaten to death with a beer bottle" was inappropriate to follow *Jack and the Beanstalk* on a Saturday morning radio schedule. Gould counted 85 separate time periods on radio during a week in July of 1950 in which violence was a major theme and lamented that television was "just as bad." He appreciated that the need for economy of time necessitated major emphasis on action, thereby sacrificing suspense and characterization, but pleaded for moderation and self-control among the broadcasters. He optimistically rationalized the preponderance of radio and television violence by stating that ultimately the then current preponderance of radio and television violence and crime would be tempered by the public itself. His astute perception of a rationale for violent programs was somewhat deflated by his naive comparison of the public temperament toward violence to that of the rampant give-away shows; inferring the eventual demise of both genres: from a 1976 perspective, his absurd naiveté is obvious. Public demand has kept crime, violence, and soap-opera neuroticism on the air despite the complaints of social scientists, social agencies, and concerned individuals.

### Summary

Radio was a crude toy in its embryonic period, but was carefully nurtured into infancy by technological improvements shared in a "patent pool" among the manufacturers. Public acceptance of the medium was almost instantaneous and the communications neonate rapidly matured into a huge industry. Though regarded as villainous by newspaper and magazine publishers who feared the advertising threat, and by phonograph manufacturers, cinema, theatre and circus industrialists who felt their audiences dwindle, the listening public was initially enthralled by radio and its programmed entertainment. Through radio, the world entered homes via a simple turn of the dial and millions of people borrowed experience from their electric companions.

Radio was lauded for its democratic nature and termed a communications medium for the masses, and in true democratic fashion its right to, and practice of, freedom of speech was proclaimed often by broadcasters, industrialists, critics, educators, and politicians.

But radio is not and never has been free. Technical, financial, and creative limitations all operate as gate-keeping parameters even from the initial stages of attempted access to the air waves. Broadcaster bias, political influence, presumptuous protection of public naiveté, commercial appeal regardless of intrinsic worth, all operate as prior censors in addition to legal restrictions filtering programs from the public view. The most effective censor of all, the on/off switch, was only the last element in a long line of perusals. Great Britain is characterized as having a broadcasting system which is highly controlled; the United States claims its system is based on freedom of speech; Canada has taken elements of the best and worst of both ideals: public network ownership has offered an intelligent cultural alternative to the private, commercially dependent sector, though both occasionally have allowed freedom of enterprise to override freedom of speech. All three systems have worked well for their respective countries: all three countries, regardless of their broadcast philosophies, have had similar problems regarding the treatment of views on any subject which are dissimilar to accepted societal norm – political, religious, social censorship can all operate to reinforce the status quo, or serve as educative alternatives; it would appear that neither policy has operated consistently in any of the three nations.

The issue of violence in radio caused national concern only in the United States, perhaps because no other land had quite the same abundance of killing on the radio airwaves, broadcast solely for the sake of its macabre commercial potential for feeding the audience fascination with sadism. Despite an early lack of empirical evidence on harmful, beneficial, or indifferent effects of listening to radio horror, controversy based upon personal opinion and isolated incidents was apparent throughout the 1930s and 1940s with regard to children's programming only; adult radio fare was not subject to severe criticism for its violent content. After 1948, attention was diverted from radio program content to a concern with television crime and violence, using all the same arguments and protestations which had been employed in criticism of radio "blood and thunder."

While parents held radio responsible for their children's sleeplessness, nightmares, and nervous habits, psychiatrists were of two basic opinions. One school held that children needed the outlet for aggression offered by mysteries, thrillers, and crime programs; the opposition believed aggression could be channelled more beneficially in other directions and that catering to the appetite for violence cultivated it. Concurrent with public criticism was a decision by some networks to broadcast mystery at later hours only, thereby still attending to adult preferences, while "protecting" the malleable minds of youth; other networks actually increased the time devoted to adventure programs for children. No correlation was found between the amount

of negative public criticism and the amount of airtime devoted to the offending adventure thrillers.

Studies undertaken with children found no essential differences between habitual listeners to radio crime and violence, and non-listeners; another found pathology in the former group. Studies with habitual listeners to soap operas (which had also been criticized for their preoccupation with crime, murder, and verbal violence) were similarly discrepant: some studies found pathology, others could discover no difference between listeners and non-listeners.

Although lobbying groups existed in the United States and, to a much lesser degree, in Canada and Britain, the three countries never perceived a need for official prophylactic measures against the social disease of glorified radio gore.

## Chapter Seven

# Comics: The Exception of Press Censorship

### Introduction

Freedom of the press, an established fact of twentieth-century Canadian, British, and American life, once again became an issue of intense debate, moral campaigning, pervasive extralegal censorship, and even legislated censorship in the Forties and Fifties. This time it was crime and horror comic books which became the focus of concern. Under the deceptive name of "funnies," they had been on the market for nearly ten years before parents, educators, religious groups, and governments discovered the "shocking nature of their stories." Three precedents were set during the controversy which are important as new forms of social control over the mass media.<sup>1</sup>

For the first time, professional and "scientific" opinion was fully represented on both sides of the censorship issue, originally inspiring, and thereafter sustaining, the twenty-year battle against the comic books. Rallying the support of parents were the familiar Comstockian figures, the self-appointed guardians of youthful morality. However, once aroused to the potential dangers of comic-book reading, vast networks of grass roots organizations emerged, and all over the world citizens' groups combated the internationally distributed "Yankee comics." By the twentieth century, Canadian, British, and American governments had assumed the role of protector of press freedom. During the years of controversy over the control of comic-book content, these governments abdicated their role to condone blacklisting and other extralegal censorship practices. Thus, the comic books became the exception to the growth of twentieth-century press freedom in these countries. With psychiatric, educational, religious, parental, and governmental sympathy on the side of censorship, comic-book contents were restricted by industry self-regulation in the United States, customs restrictions in Britain, and in Canada by a Criminal Code amendment.

### The Comic Strip

The comic book had its immediate origin in the newspaper comic strip. The first comic book was simply a collection of popular newspaper strips, published in

book format.<sup>2</sup> Yet in style and content the comic book is more akin to the children's story papers or "pulps" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. P.M. Pickard has called the comic book "a species of the penny dreadful" and noted a continuity of such characters as highwayman Dick Turpin.<sup>3</sup> Another popular culture historian, James Steranko, traces the connection between the pulps and the comic book:

In the late nineteenth century the 'bloody pulps' were selling in the millions, exploiting every subject imaginable: western, war, adventure, mystery, horror, science fiction – with an incredibly undisciplined vitality – built circulation on the public's voracious appetite for heroics. When the pulps approached saturation point, marketers found in the comics a new way to sell their product and thus came the Golden Age of the Comics.<sup>4</sup>

While the newspaper strips were generally disregarded in discussions of comic-book violence, several critics imply that violence in comic books was a culmination of the growing preponderance of violence in the strips during the 1930s. Bruce Hutchinson's content analysis of newspaper strips revealed that 100 per cent of the strips were comedy in 1911. In 1939, they were 29 per cent violent content; in 1966, violence had been reduced to 16 per cent of the total.<sup>5</sup> Before the Thirties, non-comical strips were kept to a minimum in most Canadian, British, and American newspapers. *The Toronto Star* carried no serious strips in its Canada-wide weekly and only two in its daily.<sup>6</sup> The early comics were all comedy for its own sake. The Thirties used comedy just to lighten heavy drama. By the Fifties a third major transition in comic-strip style led to a proliferation of strips aimed at specific audiences. Violence was minimized and replaced by representations of "types of common humanity."<sup>7</sup>

The strips have been interpreted as functioning as a retreat from reality. As the harsh realities of the real world changed, the world of the comic strip changed to offer the appropriate escape. Thus, the early Twenties, featuring strips like *Blondie*, provided "an escape from reality into the old American Dream-life untrammeled by economic cares."<sup>8</sup> These characters had only trivial worries that were easily corrected. A different cultural

expression was created for the harsher atmosphere of the Thirties. The strips became compulsively concerned with power. Aaron Berkman, the sociologist, writing in the Thirties, describes this phenomenon:

Today, attuned to the times the comic depicts the lives of gangsters, G-men, Babbity, Alger book heroes – in fact, the whole social and cultural outlook of the average American is here presented to the . . . student [the ideological content of the average American's mind]. In fact, the comic strip may be said to contain, within itself, the kind of 'neurosis' from which the public suffers and to which newspapers cater. . . . No doubt, the success of the comic strip lies partly in the fact that it is delivered in a form easy to digest. It is presented in small doses, affording temporary release. . . . The rugged individual, his desire to share the vicissitudes of fortune with his fellow man suppressed by the philosophy of dog eat dog, seeks solace from a harassing reality in the movies, the comic strip – venting his affections upon fictitious characters and Hollywood shadows, which, at their best, act as a mild laxative.<sup>9</sup>

It was a Canadian, Harold Foster, who began the trend toward increased violence in the strips. In 1929 Foster illustrated "Tarzan of the Apes," whose instant popularity inspired "Buck Rogers," "Flash Gordon," "Dick Tracy," "Terry and the Pirates," and many more "adventure" strips.<sup>10</sup> The strip "Dick Tracy," aroused considerable protest against its preoccupation with violence when it first appeared in 1931. "With Dick Tracy, the first civil murder was committed in the funnies."<sup>11</sup> Several papers dropped the strip's more lurid and brutal episodes but when it was conceded that violence in a context of unrealism was acceptable the strip became immensely popular.<sup>12</sup>

The value of the new violence in the strips was debated, though not widely. Gilbert Seldes denounced the new violence as merely a gimmick:

I have nothing against the solution of violence of delicate problems, but . . . the snap ending of a blow, or failing that, one character in consternation at the brilliance of the others' wit, flying out of the picture with the cry of "ZOWIE" indicating his surcharge of emotion . . . is not the same thing as the wilful violence of Mutti and Jeff, where the attack is due to the malice or stupidity of one character, the resentment or revenge of the other.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, violence in comic strips is excused with assertions that the violence is rarely realistic, and the heroes always uphold community values, and propagate the American way of life, however watered down or exaggerated.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the strips can claim that while crime rates were increasing, strip violence decreased at a 50 per cent faster rate.<sup>15</sup>

When the controversy over crime and horror in comic books began, The Newspaper Comic Council was formed to publicly enhance the differences between the strips and the comics.<sup>16</sup> Though numerous critics did not discriminate between the two forms of comics, the strips were not singled out as "objectionable." Several plausible reasons for strip sanctity in the face of imminent comic-book censorship have been advanced. First, newspaper editors themselves censored the strips.

The creators of "Superman" originally planned it as a strip but when they could find no newspaper editor to accept the story, it appeared in comic book format.<sup>17</sup> Thus there was a tendency from the beginning for the comic books to accept and issue more violence than newspaper editors would allow. Of greater significance, however, was that newspaper strips were generally considered to be adult reading while the comic books were marketed specifically for children whose morals, it is believed, are more susceptible to corruption.

### Evolution of the Comic Book

Although several collections of strips had been published prior to 1929, the comic book was not popular until after this date. At first, all comic books were simply extensions of the newspaper strip reading habit. Many were produced as premiums to boost newspaper circulations or the products of companies such as Procter and Gamble. *Famous Funnies*, published by Eastern Colour Printing in May of 1934 was still just a collection of reprints but, in format, it was the first modern comic book. Then, between 1934 and 1936, comic books appeared containing original stories. In essence, the modern comic book, in both content and format, had appeared. These early comics were, in the true sense of the word, "funnies" bearing titles such as *More Fun* and *New Fun*, published by Major Malcolm Wheeler. But the "funnies" did not corner the market. As early as 1937, the first of the bold, sensational comics, *Detective Comics*, was issued by Harry Donenfeld. "A new tendency toward the incredible, fascinating, horrifying, thrilling, was beginning in the strip [during the same period] but the heroes of the comic books were to make strip heroes look like sissies."<sup>18</sup>

Superman was first issued in *Action Comics* in 1938, then came Batman, Wonder Woman, Captain Marvel, Terry and the Pirates, and a plethora of hooded heroes. It was the costumed superhero syndrome which set the comic book industry on its feet and that has remained the most consistently popular. All these superheroes were featured in special World War II issues, fighting the Nazis and the Japanese, both at home and abroad. There were even encounters staged with Hitler himself. "World War II provided a most natural habitat for these hooded people to whip around in. Japanese and Nazi spies were roped in by the thousands as supermen tore around America cleaning it up."<sup>19</sup>

"But there is more in comic books than fantasies of fistcuffs."<sup>20</sup> Among the most "objectionable" were western gunfighter stories, crime and detective stories, war and action comics like *Frontline Combat* some science fiction such as *Weird Science*, suspense in *Suspension Stories*, and horror as portrayed in *Tales from the Crypt* and *Vault of Horror*. Of these, horror was the most popular. Yet there were also "good" comic books produced by Dell Publishers and William Gaines (EC Comics). In 1942, Dell Comics began to feature the Disney animal characters in comic book stories. There

is “a strong and persistent moral impulse behind all of the animal comics . . . part of their intent is education” stated their publisher.<sup>21</sup> William Gaines was involved more directly in education, publishing comics entitled *Picture Stories from the Bible* and *Picture Stories from American History*.<sup>22</sup>

### Comic Books in Britain

During World War II, American soldiers were provided with war and superhero comic books with their rations. The soldiers passed them on to children in Allied and occupied countries and inadvertently created a world market for the American comic-book industry. Immensely popular among children, the contents of American comic books became a universal concern to parents and governments.

The first comics for children in Britain were produced by Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe),<sup>23</sup> founder of Amalgamated Press. His intention was to produce funny, harmless pictures and stories for children to combat the influence of the “penny dreadfuls.” Harmsworth’s publications included *Comic Cuts* and *Chips*, which consisted of strip-like cartoons interspersed with jokes. Both were immensely popular between 1890 and 1950, selling at a halfpenny and undercutting the market for the “penny dreadfuls.”<sup>24</sup>

The British comic books, a combination of instruction and information, lost their appeal to the British children who had been introduced to American comics during the War. When the “Dollar Bar” prevented the importation of comics, printing moulds of entire comics, together with copyrights, were sold to British publishers. American horror, crime, and superhero comics cut drastically into the pre-war circulations of Harmsworth’s comics.<sup>25</sup>

### The Canadian Comic Book Industry

In Canada, World War II created, rather than disrupted, a comic-book industry. On December 6, 1940, the Canadian government, to conserve foreign exchange credits, passed the War Exchange Conservation Act which forbade the importation of certain “non-essential” items into Canada from non-sterling countries. The list of banned material included comic books. Toronto publisher Cyril Vaughan Bell stepped in to fill the vacuum.

Bell’s first comic book, *Wow*, included episodes of Edmund Legault’s “Dart Daring,” the dare-devil master swordsman, and “Whiz Wallace,” a U.S. navy pilot transported to the Invisible Planet. Although this first issue was in full colour, Bell found the colour process too lengthy and expensive and thereafter produced what were to be called the Canadian “Whites.” Bell’s comics, even without colour, were immensely popular in the absence of American competition. However, when the ban was lifted Bell ceased publication, unable to compete with the influx of multi-coloured American comics.

During the War, Bell produced five adventure titles: *Wow*, *Triumph*, *Active*, *Dime*, and *Commando Heroes*; two pure humour titles: *Joke* and *Dizzy Don*; and four featuring all-Canadian tales: *Dixon of the Mounted*, *Nettuna of the Northern Lights*, *Derek of Bras D’Or*, and *Johnny Canuck*. His heroes, spies, detectives, war heroes, costumed heroes, and western heroes were strikingly similar to the Captain Marvels and Supermen south of the Border. The all-Canadian heroes, like their American counterparts, fought Nazis and Japanese across the ocean. In all, Bell produced two million comics in the course of the War. His only major competitor, Anglo-American Publishing Company, produced primarily re-drawn American strips of Captain Marvel.

Bell asserts that he never allowed his comics to get “dirty” or unduly violent:

A lot of our artists had quite a sense of the macabre and they used to hang around the morgue or the emergency departments of the hospitals to see how dead people lay, or how it looked when a doctor shoved a hypodermic needle into somebody. They wanted to be able to draw that sort of thing accurately. And the artists were young fellows, and pretty much interested in sex. But we never allowed anything like that into our books. Our books had our own censorship committee, which was mainly me, and our books were clean.<sup>26</sup>

Michael Hirsh and Patrick Laubert, authors of an essential study of the Canadian comic book industry, retort:

In this claim, Bell has either broad standards or a poor memory. He’s right about keeping explicit sex out of his plots, but his five non-humour titles had a high percentage of violent deaths and a goodly percentage of downright sadism. The latter often involved lush-bosomed young women – in scanty, clinging clothes – at the mercy of drooling torturers from prehistoric times or other planets or, most often, from Nazi Germany.<sup>27</sup>

### Violent Content

A brief glance at the pages of most comic books of this period is sufficient to convince anyone that violence predominates. However, there is more to this type of violence than meets the eye. Marilyn Graafls did a content analysis of 351 comic books in 1954 and concluded:

Violence can be portrayed both pictorially and verbally in comic books. Among fantasy stories, particularly, violence is underestimated if only actions shown in the frames are counted. The types of characters, plots, and settings contribute to violence by identifying them with realistic people and events.

Example: A story used for its plot a Pied Piper theme. The Piper tells the animals to revolt against their slave conditions. When they attack, the hero refuses to listen to objections from the villagers when he kills the animals by destroying a bridge. “Don’t you understand all those animals have learned to hunt humans and they will pass that hatred on to their descendants if we let them?” The story ends with the caption: “Where are the descendants of those animals today? Ever catch your cat staring steadily at you in the firelight or watch a horse look back at you as you cross behind him?”

Language may be used to heighten the degree of horror by (1) encouraging the reader to anticipate it:

Example: This first tale of Death and Suspense will keep you chilled to the bone right up to the terror-filled conclusion! The blood spills fast and often as Hazel [main character who murders husband] reaps the reward of a successful murder.

(2) reinforcing superstitious notions about supernatural beings;

Example: "Who can doubt the age-old horror of cosmic ghouls that roam the earth in search of prey . . . of countless things that walk by night," is the preface to a story about werewolves.

(3) describing the feelings and attitudes of characters which cannot be revealed to the reader through pictures;

Example: As a man gropes toward the figure of a woman outlined behind a lighted dressing screen, the caption above says, "Now you know why you were so interested in her white alabaster skin . . . the beautiful red lips, the creamy neck . . . now you know. He says, 'Can't wait any longer . . . must go to her . . . must kill, kill, kill!'" The last frames show he is a werewolf.

and (4) replacing pictures of brutality.

Example: A woman kills her husband with a kitchen knife. Picture shows blood on the knife but no injury on the husband's body. "The rapier sharp blade sliced him directly between the shoulder blades . . ." Then the woman dragged him to the pen where a crazed bull was kept. Caption: "Even a stomach as strong as Hazel's couldn't stand the sight of the Bull's attack on Ezra's corpse. Gagging she turned and fled back to the house."

Finally, the sequence of events may in the absence of either words or pictures of any action create horror.

Example: The story is about a man who gets entangled in a swamp. One frame shows him in the swamp and a huge vulture circling above in a downward direction. The next frame shows the man being carried out on a stretcher with bandages over his eyes.<sup>28</sup>

It is apparent that, even if pictorial representations of violence were removed from the comic books, numerous techniques remain by which violence would still predominate. In the face of such techniques, controlling violent content becomes an arduous task.

### The Public Outcry

Despite the violent nature of the comic books and their vast circulation,<sup>29</sup> the first public outcry did not come until 1940. Children's author Sterling North was first to articulate what were to become standard, yet more heated criticisms of the comic books in the *Chicago Daily News*:

Badly drawn, badly written, and badly printed – a strain on young eyes and young nervous systems – the effect of these pulp-paper nightmares is that of a violent stimulant. . . . Their crude blacks and reds spoil the child's natural sense of colour, their hypodermic injections of sex and murder make the child impatient with better though quieter stories – the shame lies largely with the parents who don't know and don't care what their children are reading. It is with the unimaginative teachers who force stupid, dull twaddle down eager young throats, and, of course, it lies with the completely immoral publishers of the "comics" – guilty of a cultural slaughter of the innocents. But

the antidote to the "comic" magazine poison can be found in any library or good book store. The parent who does not acquire that antidote for his child is guilty of criminal negligence.<sup>30</sup>

North's condemnation of the comic books was not directly responsible for any concrete action to control their content. However, New York psychiatrist Fredric Wertham expanded North's criticisms, enriched them with clinical evidence, and began a vigorous personal campaign against the comic books in 1946. Within a year, the American public was demanding regulation.

The culmination of Wertham's seven-year investigation was the publication of *Seduction of the Innocent* (1953). Wertham clearly concludes throughout the book:

It is our clinical judgment, in all kinds of behavior disorders and personality difficulties of children that comic books do play a part . . . [they are] a contributing factor not to be neglected . . . The study of one factor does not obliterate the importance of other factors. . . . Our research has proven there is a significant correlation between crime comics reading and the more serious forms of juvenile delinquency. . . . Crime comics are an agent with harmful potentialities. They bring about a mass conditioning of children with different effects in the individual case. A child is not a simple unit which exists outside of its living social ties. Comic books themselves may be the virus, or the cause of a lack of resistance to the social virus of a harmful environment.<sup>31</sup>

Yet his critics condemn him primarily for being too simplistic in attributing the cause of juvenile delinquency to the crime and horror comic books.

Wertham's own words refute these allegations. As a psychiatrist, he acknowledged the complexity of the situation and did not believe that portrayed violence would be simply translated into actual violent acts. Wertham regarded the comic books as a significant aspect of the child's environment<sup>32</sup> which may exert an influence along any of the following lines:

- 1) The comic-book format is an invitation to illiteracy.
- 2) Crime comic books create an atmosphere of cruelty and deceit.
- 3) They create a readiness for temptation.
- 4) They stimulate unwholesome fantasies.
- 5) They suggest criminal or sexually abnormal ideas.
- 6) They furnish the rationalization for them, which may be ethically even more harmful than the impulse.
- 7) They suggest the forms a delinquent impulse may take and supply details of technique.
- 8) They may tip the scales toward maladjustment or delinquency.<sup>33</sup>

The greater portion of *Seduction of the Innocent* is description of actual cases in which the comic books have been identified as the seducer. Bombarding parents with this "evidence" was a highly effective means of forcing all those concerned with children's welfare to take a stand on the issue and press for legal action. Wertham proposed legal control of children's comic books as the only effective remedy to the evils he discovered. He noted, however, a traditional barrier:

People are always ready to censor obvious crudity in sex. But they have not yet learned the role of temptation, propaganda, seduction and indoctrination in the field of crime and violence.<sup>34</sup>

### The Censorship Issue

Wertham was not alone in suggesting censorship as an appropriate solution. Margaret Mead, in 1955, suggested censorship as a means of protecting the young.

Mass communications – movies, television, paper books – bring us up against the fact that in such media it is impossible to discriminate between children and adults. We can keep children under sixteen out of theatres or movie houses, keep their allowance so low that they cannot afford to buy expensive books, and train librarians to hide books that are regarded as unfit for children. But where the child, with a turn of the dial or an easily earned quarter, can listen or look or read with no adult present to censor, this becomes impossible.<sup>35</sup>

And Walter Lippmann, in 1954 concurred:

Censorship is no doubt a clumsy and usually a stupid and self-defeating remedy for such evils. But a continual exposure of a generation to the commercial exploitation of the enjoyment of violence and cruelty is one way to corrode the foundations of a civilized society. For my part, believing as I do in freedom of speech and thought, I see no objections in principle to censorship of the mass entertainment of the young. Until some more refined way is worked out for controlling this evil thing, the risks to our liberties are, I believe, decidedly less than the risks of unmanageable violence.<sup>36</sup>

More extreme in his interpretation, social critic Gershon Legman condemns "our culture [where] the perversion of children is an industry"<sup>37</sup> with the observation that, "where institutionalized violence appears in history it is the last resort of bankrupt civilizations sick and reeling to death."<sup>38</sup>

On the opposite side of the censorship issue, there were fears that controls would expand into broader censorship once instituted. Anti-censorship opinion based on definition of "freedom of expression" was articulated by Robert J. Blakely:

We seem to be tending, almost by tacit agreement, to regard freedom of expression as a *private* right to be restricted like other private rights when they are abused instead of a *public* right that cannot be restricted without damage to the general welfare. True, dark irrational forces have been discovered, both in the individual and in the society, but how were they discovered? By rational analysis. And what is the alternative? Certainly not irrationality. True, the margins of permissible error in the modern world are narrower than used to be. But how do we avoid or minimize error? Certainly not by being ignorant of alternatives or of relevant facts. Freedom of expression from the social point of view is the right of citizens to hear all arguments and to look at all proofs and the responsibility to let others do the same.<sup>39</sup>

### The Psychiatric Defence

Along with the banter concerning the value and appropriateness of censorship, numerous psychiatrists took issue with Wertham's interpretation of the value of

comic books in children's lives. Although "every child who was six years old in 1938 had by now [1948] absorbed an absolute minimum of 18,000 pictorial beatings, shootings, stranglings, blood puddles and torturings to death from comic books alone,"<sup>40</sup> many psychiatrists continued to defend them as merely healthy outlets for pent-up emotions. "So long as our children's books will not give them the sense of 'aliveness of modernity,' of speedy action, they will turn increasingly to the comics."<sup>41</sup>

Among psychiatrists who defend the comics on the basis of elaborate psychological theories, the most vocal are Josette Frank, Sidonie M. Gruenberg, Lauretta Bender, and Reginald S. Laurie. All agree that "the motivation toward unsocial acts lies much deeper than any casual contact with ideas on a printed page."<sup>42</sup> Contrary to Wertham, comic books serve as valuable aids to the child's psychological development and social adjustment, though they may be harmful for children who are already maladjusted.

Children apparently progress through three stages in comics reading, from funny-animal type to adventure, crime, and mystery, and finally to educational comics. In each of the three stages, the comics perform different functions contributing to the child's development. In the earliest stage, comics provide a projection of the child's self in characters that are plausible in behaviour and set in every day domestic situations. In the second stage, the comics allow for ego inflation through identification with the superhero. Progressing through the second stage, the child realizes the incredibility of past heroes but, still needing a hero for identification, chooses more plausible ones. Finally, by the third stage (approximately age 13), the child demands psychological reality, and comics serve an encyclopedic function for direction in the real world.<sup>43</sup>

Psychiatric opinion contends that,

So far corrective tendencies in comic writing from censors, self-appointed or otherwise, have tended to sterilize the comic as a means of satisfying the psychological needs of children. To remove fantasy, or to reduce comics to the true and real, tends to make them more threatening and productive of anxiety, because they offer no solution to the problems of aggression.<sup>44</sup>

The mass media not only facilitate personality growth, but enrich the child's experiences. Action, suspense, hostility, and adventure provide an opportunity for the child to come to grips with his anti-social impulses by satisfying vicariously what might otherwise develop into aggressive acts.<sup>45</sup> The corollary to this statement is that "when enough thrills and excitement are actually experienced, the vast majority of children have no need" for these vicarious experiences.<sup>46</sup> The solution, then, is not the over-solicitous parent, shielding children from all potentially harmful influences. A positive approach rather than a negative one is suggested. Parents are charged with the responsibility of developing the child's equipment for more critical appraisals

of comics and other media of entertainment through expanding their fields of experience.<sup>47</sup>

These psychiatrists do not ignore the possibility that representations of horror and violence may adversely affect youthful minds. However, they propose that:

No matter how weird or violent they may be, programs do not create disturbances. But given a child who evidences disturbance, one must question the effect of the stimulus on this particular child. Pathology enters the picture when the emotional disturbance persists over a long period and is palpably heightened by this type of experience.<sup>48</sup>

Even among disturbed children, the banning of violent comic books and other entertainment is not advised.<sup>49</sup> Again, the onus is on parents to know their children to ensure an appropriate balance of activities. A good balance of activities would include not only other types of reading but helping children develop constructive activities, organizing sports activities and community centres, and widely publicizing the achievements of youth, offering rewards to encourage children's aspirations.<sup>50</sup> It is stressed, that in the psychological sense, aggression is not synonymous with hostility and fighting is not the only satisfying outlet. In this respect, education is criticized for its lack of resourcefulness and its ignorance of means to deal with frustration.

One very different but relevant point of view is worthy of examination. The comic books are considered a very special educational tool by Lovell Thompson in his 1942 study. By reading comic books, "you can have the twentieth century all at once instead of day by day."<sup>51</sup> The comics, Thompson suggests, are preparing today's children for becoming tomorrow's leaders. If parents, therefore, cannot sanction children's reading material, they should close their eyes to it. This futurist tendency was a matter of concern to the United States government during World War II. Comic books were screened before exportation as potential purveyors of information of American scientific experimentation. All references to atomic bombs in Superman comics were deleted and even the publishers could not understand why until Hiroshima.<sup>52</sup>

Amid all the arguments on behalf of children, too often the child's opinion is ignored. As an example, one articulate young man was very much aware of the hypocrisy of censorship.

Next we questioned a regular subscriber. He told us that people who called themselves grown-up made him tired. He and his schoolmates only read their comics for seven years. Grown-ups had forty-nine years of being grown-up – seven times longer than children – to read what they liked.

The child glanced round the playground where we were standing, selected a stone, threw it at a passing cat, missed it, then said that he understood there was a time when children read Grimm and Andersen and Beatrix Potter and liked and believed in stories they told. Grown-ups, he said, with their newspapers, picture-papers, radios, and wars every twenty years, had knocked the bottom out of romance. 'Then you turn round and growl at us and our comics. And you grown-ups, you read frightful murder books, too, about detectives and

crooks, and magazines like True Romance and True Detective and Wild West, and most of the films you see are just plain awful.' He then asked if we had seen a recent advertisement for a horror film: "If you like your mental beef-steak underdone, here it is . . . Gory, Ripe, and Red! In "They Met in the Dark," weird horrors and the unspeakable terrors! A chilling thrill in every scene." 'Art!' said the child, 'you make me tired.' He reached for another stone.<sup>53</sup>

It is obvious that the reports of psychiatric opinion display wide differences in interpretations of the potential harm or value of comic books.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, amid the confusion, the public was aroused on the side of censorship.

### American Control of Comic Book Content

One of the first American groups to speak out against crime and horror comics was the National Office for Decent Literature. The NODL was established by the Catholic Bishops of the United States in 1938 to "set in motion the moral forces of the entire country . . . against the lascivious type of literature which threatens moral, social and national life."<sup>55</sup> The organization attempted to coordinate activities and supply information to all interested groups, regardless of religion. At first, the NODL was concerned primarily with magazines and paperback books but since 1947 it has also been evaluating comic books. The NODL organized volunteer reviewing committees of approximately 150 members to evaluate comics as "acceptable," "borderline" or "objectionable." Four out of five reviewers had to judge a publication objectionable before any action was taken. NODL Parish Decency Crusades were organized to visit newsstands, distribute its "objectionable" lists and secure the removal of those publications listed. Citizens' Committees were also encouraged by the NODL to organize public officials, educators, and all those concerned with youth to sponsor legislation. The NODL Code reads as follows:

The National Office for Decent Literature has been established to safeguard the moral and spiritual ideals of youth through a program designed:

- 1) to remove objectionable comic books, magazines and pocket-size books from places of distribution accessible to youth;
- 2) to encourage the publishing and distribution of good literature;
- 3) to promote plans to develop worthwhile reading habits during the formative years.

The NODL fulfills its function, in part, by offering to responsible individuals and organizations an evaluation of current comic books, magazines and pocket-size books based on clearly defined, objective standards. The Code followed explicitly defines objectionable reading for youth.

Publications listed as objectionable are those which:

- 1) Glorify crime or the criminal.
- 2) Describe in detail ways to commit criminal acts.
- 3) Hold lawful authority in disrespect.
- 4) Exploit horror, cruelty or violence.
- 5) Portray sex facts offensively.
- 6) Feature indecent, lewd or suggestive photographs or illustrations.

- 7) Carry advertising which is offensive in content or advertise products which may lead to physical or moral harm.
- 8) Use blasphemous, profane or obscene speech indiscriminately and repeatedly.
- 9) Hold up to ridicule any national, religious or racial group.<sup>56</sup>

The General Federation of Women's Clubs, representing a national membership of four million, also appointed volunteers to visit newsstands, list the titles that were available, and the names of the purchasers. In this way, the GFWC could track down readers and purchasers of objectionable comic books to exert a personal, and therefore more powerful, influence.<sup>57</sup>

The Cincinnati Committee on the Evaluation of the Comic Books was founded on May 25, 1948, as a result of the inspiration of Dr. Jesse L. Murrel. Its members included a broad cross-section of the community, from religious groups, educators, juvenile court judges, librarians, and representatives of Parent-Teacher Associations.

Originally, the Cincinnati policy was to improve comic content by means of cooperation with publishers and distributors. When these activities failed to produce effects, the Committee developed a code and criteria to judge the comics and rate them as "no objection," "some objection" and "objectionable." Each comic book was evaluated on this scale in terms of its cultural, moral and emotional impacts. The resulting evaluations were widely distributed across the United States and Canada and were published annually in *Parents' Magazine*.<sup>58</sup> In 1957, the Committee ceased compiling complete evaluations because, in its terms, it "had put itself out of business."<sup>59</sup>

The Child Study Association followed a similar program of action. In 1943, and again in 1949, the Children's Book Committee of the Association published a survey of the comic-book industry. No titles were named since they were very elusive. Rather, trends in comic-book content and "guide-posts" for parental selection of good comic books were proposed in detail. The Association preferred a process of education and selection to that of censorship and imposed regulation.<sup>60</sup>

On the local level, spontaneous reactions against comic books were numerous. More than fifty cities had sought action against the sale of comic magazines by 1948. Some had passed local ordinances regulating their sale; others had set up censorship committees. Thirty-two bills or resolutions to curb comic books were introduced in state legislatures in 1949, although none passed. Only one, in New York, passed both houses, and it was vetoed by the governor. However, in May 1955, New York State did make it illegal to sell "obscene and objectionable comics" to minors and use such words as "crime, sex, horror, terror" in titles of comic books.<sup>61</sup> Municipal action such as the following was widespread:

- 1) Working together, Indianapolis magazine distributors, city officials, and civic groups banned 35 comic books.

- 2) Detroit police had forbidden the sale of 36 comic books at local newsstands in advance of censure that was threatened.
- 3) Hillsdale, Michigan, had banned the same books prohibited in Detroit. This action was taken under a Michigan statute outlawing "obscene, indecent, and immoral literature."
- 4) Civic leaders in Centralia, Washington, had appealed to the comic book publishers to tone down their material.<sup>61</sup>
- 5) Parochial students of St. Cyril's Parish, Chicago, and St. Patrick's School, Binghamton, put the torch to heaps of comic books and priests urged a boycott on stores and newsstands selling comic books.<sup>62</sup>

At least fifty cities had "banned, burned or blasted" many of the "objectionable" comic books.<sup>63</sup> The industry finally felt the pressure, and, in July of that year, fourteen major publishers formed the Association of Comics Magazine Publishers. To protect themselves from criticism and restrictive legislation, the publishers adopted a code of ethics and urged members to abstain from publishing "sexy, wanton comics"; glorified or sympathetic treatments of crime; "details and methods of a crime committed by a youth"; vulgar and obscene language; and scenes of sadistic torture. However, the members of the association represented only 30 per cent of the comic book industry. Some of the largest publishers refused to join the association (Dell, Fawcett; William Gaines; and National Comics Publications) because they believed their comic books above reproach.<sup>64</sup> Dell's statement applauded the Comics Association in their elimination of horror and terror comics but took exception to the rest of its platform which would only regulate rather than eliminate *all* questionable comics.<sup>65</sup>

Criticism of the comics continued despite the attempt at self regulation. Finally the American federal government took a look at the comics during the proceedings of the "Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce" under the leadership of Senator Estes Kefauver (1950). The investigation of the influence of comic books on juvenile delinquency received only incidental attention, and no recommendations evolved from the contradictory reports presented.<sup>66</sup> Again in 1952, a congressional committee, the "Select Committee on Current Pornographic Materials," chaired by E.C. Gathings, dealt with comic books as only a secondary concern. The Committee was primarily concerned with obscenity and pornography in magazines and pocket books. The Gathings Committee recommended that all publishers should remove, on their own initiative, "objectionable" literature to avoid federal legislation.<sup>67</sup>

The most recent and extensive government study of the comic books was conducted by the Senate Committee of the Judiciary to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency, known as the Kefauver Senate Committee. The *Interim Report* (March, 1954) of the Committee deals extensively with the contributions of crime and horror comics to juvenile delinquency. After intensive questioning of comic-book publishers,

psychologists, and other interested parties, Senator Kefauver stated his belief that

... this Nation cannot afford the calculated risk involved in the continued mass dissemination of crime and horror comic books to children . . . The Committee flatly rejects all suggestions of governmental censorship as being totally out of keeping with our basic American concept of a free press operating in a free land for a free people . . . Standards for such products, whether in the form of a code or by the policies of individual producers, should not be aimed to eliminate only that which can be proved beyond doubt to demoralize youth. Rather the aim should be to eliminate all materials that potentially exert detrimental effects.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, the United States government placed the responsibility for cleaning up the comics in the hands of the comic-book industry. At the same time, however, vigilante citizens' groups were praised for their anti-comic-book campaigns and urged to continue pointing out potentially harmful material.

With the advice of the Kefauver Committee, the industry formed a new self-regulatory group, the Comic Magazines Association of America, with Charles F. Murphy as the director. Murphy banned "horror" and "crime" comic books and announced a new code of performance similar to the earlier one. Again, Dell refused to join but agreed to cooperate with the association.

Murphy was confident of raising the industry's standards when he stated, "ours is a code with teeth in it. In fact it is one of the strongest codes ever adopted by a communications medium."<sup>69</sup> All comic books abiding by the code received the Association's seal of approval. Vigilante committees were urged to pressure newsdealers to suppress the offensive comic books without seals.

Although the code was created primarily for industry self-defence, it proved suicidal for some. The code, though vague, was sufficiently narrow to eliminate the worst offenders. Within six months, out of 5,000 stories screened, 200 were rejected and 1,300 were revised before publication. Advertising was cleaned up and all advertisements for guns and knives were banned.

The Association's seal of approval had an incredible cathartic effect on a public incensed over comic book violence; it allowed almost everyone to forget about the comics. Yet, according to Wertham, the code really did nothing to remove crime from comic books. All it did was disguise violent actions "in a hypocritical aura of good taste providing that certain things never be depicted realistically. The overall effect was that murder looked more like a game under this new seal of approval."<sup>70</sup>

Although the code made legislation unnecessary, it is doubtful that any pending legislation would have been passed since excesses similar to those which appeared in the comics could be found in any other medium, and could hardly have been prohibited by constitutional legislation.<sup>71</sup> But the primary barrier against legislative action was the legal precedent set by the United States

Supreme Court in 1948. "Today *Winters v. New York* stands as the case of main reliance for those who defend as a constitutional right the existence of crime and violence in the various printed media."<sup>72</sup>

Under New York penal law which prohibited publications "principally made up of . . . pictures or stories of deeds of bloodshed, lust or crime," 2,000 copies of *Bargains in Bodies*, being sold by Winters, a book dealer, were seized. The publication was predominantly crime and bloodshed, illustrated with gruesome pictures of victims. The book dealer was originally convicted, the conviction was upheld in higher courts, and then reversed by the United States Supreme Court. The final decision asserted that although such words as "obscene," "lewd," "lascivious," "filthy," "indecent" or "disgusting" were "well understood through long use in the criminal law," "massing stories to incite crime" and "stories of deeds of bloodshed and violence" were too "vague" and "unclear." Winters was acquitted and the New York law was abolished.<sup>73</sup>

### Control of Comic Books in Canada

In Canada, though opinion on both sides of the comics issue mirrored that south of the border,<sup>74</sup> the end result was legal censorship. Not until the late Forties were Canadians mobilized against crime and horror magazines, again primarily as a result of Fredric Wertham's inspirational campaign.

The comics campaign began in Canada in 1947 when circulation was estimated at 60,000,000 comics sold annually with nearly four out of every five Canadian children reading them.<sup>75</sup> Although the Victoria, B.C., Parent-Teacher Association and the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire both claim to have purged Canada of this menace, Edward Davie Fulton, Tory member of parliament from Kamloops, B.C., was primarily responsible for the Canadian legislation.

On October 18, 1948, the Kamloops Parent-Teachers Association sent Fulton a representative bundle of comic books which they believed to be "poisoning" the minds of their children. Fulton, shocked by their content, made a thorough investigation of the content of the comics, the trade volume, the distribution channels, and the records of the alleged effects on children. Fulton's findings confirmed his belief that action should be taken. Fulton drafted and introduced a bill in 1948 to amend the Criminal Code to ban crime-comic books and prosecute publishers and distributors.

The debates on the Fulton Bill were extensive. Speakers included judges and school board members and numerous other informed opinions were voiced.<sup>76</sup> The Minister of Justice, the Honourable Stuart S. Garson, summed up the debates as follows:

When publishers and disseminators of various kinds of crime comics and obscene literature are heartened and emboldened by this concern of ours for the preservation of literary and artistic freedom, and become steadily more impudent in their degradation of that freedom so that they transform freedom

into license, the time comes, and I think we all agree that it has come when we must take further action to curtail offences.<sup>77</sup>

The above statement was probably inspired by Fulton's speech in which he stated:

Even if there were only one case of crime, the commission of which was influenced by crime comics, even if the enactment of the bill only prevented one murder, one crime of violence being committed by a juvenile, I would say that the act, if passed, would have served its purpose.<sup>78</sup>

The revised bill to outlaw crime comics by an amendment to the Criminal Code was passed unanimously by the House of Commons.<sup>79</sup>

The bill was then referred to a standing committee of the Senate which heard testimony from comic book publishers. The publishers almost convinced the Senators that comic books did not have an adverse moral effect on children. However, when they displayed their wares, their arguments lost all credibility.<sup>80</sup> The Senate passed the Fulton Bill by the overwhelming majority of 91 to 5.

An article in a 1949 issue of *Saturday Night* catches the spirit with which newsdealers greeted the new law.

The prospect of two years in jail threw many of the 10,000 retail news dealers into panic. Every one of them was compelled to act as censor of the comic books (up to 175 titles) on his shelves. Unable or reluctant to make the fine distinction between "fun" comics and "crime" comics, the dealers began sweeping all of them off their displays and cancelled orders for new ones. The word that gave most trouble was "substantially": would comics like "Dick Tracy" come under the ban?<sup>81</sup>

After the initial panic subsided, a committee of publishers, distributors, and printers met to decide which of their comics would be affected by the new law. They drew up a list of twenty-five titles which were immediately discontinued. This joint decision offered dealers some security that those titles remaining were acceptable.<sup>82</sup> Though not agreeing that crime and horror comics were injurious to the youthful mind, they decided to appoint a group of "qualified" persons to scrutinize all comic books periodically.<sup>83</sup>

The new comics law remained almost dormant and citizens' groups continued to press for regulation. The first test case was dismissed when Magistrate G.H. Rose of the Alberta Police Court ruled that *Underworld Detective* did not fall under the definition of the Act. The defence counsel, S.J. Helman, suggested that the government should set a standard of what was salable under the new amendment and, further, that the Customs Act should be amended to conform with the new legislation to give customs officials the power to refuse crime-comic books as they did obscene publications.<sup>84</sup> Numerous other cases were tried but were dismissed because of the ambiguity of the Act.<sup>85</sup> Fulton noted in a House of Commons debate in 1954:

I suppose that no legislation of itself will do the job. There has to be in the public mind an insistence upon enforcement as well as an awareness of the problem.<sup>86</sup>

A year later, three Montreal news dealers were found guilty under the comics legislation and fined \$1,000 and costs each. Before handing down his decision, Judge Cloutier said:

Youth read this macabre material with avidity . . . much money is amassed by this exploitation of public morbidity and severe sentences up to two years in penitentiary for individuals are provided by law. . . . The stories depicted in the crime magazines which were submitted in this case can be classified as "crime tragedies" rather than "crime comics." Certainly poisoning the hearts and souls of our youth must be stopped and a severe warning must be given to those who distribute such stories . . .<sup>87</sup>

The precedent-setting success of the Montreal cases were largely the result of vigilante activities of the Bureau for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency and the Montreal Council of Women. Assistant Inspector Ovala Pelletier made a public announcement urging the public to buy any "objectionable" comic books they found and mail them with the dealer's name and address to the Bureau so that prompt action could be taken.

After the passage of the Canadian legislation, numerous American groups, most notably the United States Council of Women, corresponded with their Canadian counterparts asking for information on the origin and operation of the Canadian law. However, Canadian legislation seemed to work no better than did the American self-regulation. Fulton's conclusion that the success of regulating provisions is dependent upon a "public mind," aware of the problems and insistent upon enforcement, was proven in both Canadian and American outcomes.

#### British Control of Comic Books

By the early Fifties, the anti-crime-and-horror-comic-book crusade was widespread in Britain. Parent-teacher organizations were the first to recognize the danger and appeal to parliament for legislation. The government maintained that press freedom could not be restricted and that the comics issue was one with which parents and teachers must deal outside the realm of law. Yet the volume of public protests grew and with them appeals to the government to take action. And still the British government refused to institute any more direct censorship against British publishers of American comics to complement its ban on the importation of "objectionable" American comics.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, it was left to the "public mind" to censor crime and horror comics. This time, in the absence of industry self-regulation or government regulation, the concerned British public successfully combated the "Yankee" comics.

The British Comics Campaign Council was organized by parents and educators to examine the comics and report on their findings. The report was published and distributed widely to put pressure on publishers. Most of the comic books simply changed their titles to avoid boycotting.<sup>89</sup>

Also, the Authors' World Peace Appeal convened a

panel which endeavoured to put out an evaluation list along the lines of the American Cincinnati Association to help parents in selecting appropriate comics for their children.<sup>90</sup>

A society called the Company of New Elizabethans was founded by children's author Miss Noel Streatfield, to combat the "vicious, degrading contents of modern so-called comics" and raise parents' awareness of their content.<sup>91</sup>

*The London Times* expressed the prevailing British opinion in an article by Neville Sanderson:

This [better education] is being jeopardized by those comics which are of a particularly vicious kind with the nastiest sort of appeal to the changing instincts of adolescents . . . the onus is on officialdom to show at least that these comics are not a contributing factor [to juvenile crime]. Since these publications are universally recognized as pernicious what objection can there be to their prohibition? . . . It is, I know, a matter of grave concern to many headmasters in areas where these comics are being distributed and local education authorities are of course helpless in the matter. In an age of uncertain values and deficient faith the least that society can do is to extirpate obvious evils.<sup>92</sup>

The Chairman of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals put some of the blame for an increase of cruelty by children on the "Yankee Comics":

We do not want to prosecute children, but certainly cases during the last year were so bad we had no alternative but to bring them before the juvenile courts.<sup>93</sup>

The public maintained that it was impossible for parents to control the reading matter of adolescents effectively. A petition signed by thousands, asking Parliament to ban production, importation, and distribution of American-style comic books, was the most influential in the subsequent legislation. Finally, in 1955, the Children's and Young Persons' Act was rushed through parliament after archbishops and government officials were persuaded to examine some of the offending comic books. Yet it was the "obscene," and references to sex that were their prime concerns rather than violence and horror.<sup>94</sup>

Beginning in 1950, several publishers attempted to combat the influence of American comic books with the publication of comics more suitable for children, which upheld the British tradition of combining good-quality juvenile literature with excitement and adventure. Hulton Press published *Eagle*, which reached a million circulation very quickly. Other publications followed such as Amalgamated Press's *School Friend* (1950), and Thompson and Company's *Lion* (1951).<sup>95</sup> With the public censure of crime and horror comics and the availability of these appealing but "wholesome" comics, the popularity of the American imports began to wane.

### Comic Books and Television

Fredric Wertham believed that the amount of violence offered children by television was derived partly from

crime comics. He found obvious connections in qualitative aspects of violence as well; in "the connection of violence with other things – family life, sex, daily living, absence of tragic feeling, etc. – and the details themselves."<sup>96</sup> Wertham continues:

For a while before 1945 it seemed that the crime-comic book industry had a monopoly on the brutalization of children. Now it has some competition from television and the other media so children may get the idea that violence is natural from any or all of the media . . . TV is on its way to become the greatest medium of our time . . . the hopes it raises are high, even though its most undoubted achievement to date is that it has brought homicide into the home.<sup>97</sup>

Wertham advanced the same criticisms against television violence as he did against comic books and proposed a code for television.

Saturday children's television is the most obvious link between the comics and television. A study conducted by Earle F. Barcus found that one-third of the story time dealt predominantly with crime and its solution. More than half the stories included active chase scenes and 20 per cent included obviously frightening suspenseful situations. More than eight out of ten story segments contained at least one recognizable act of violence and in thirty per cent violence "saturated" the stories. Barcus concludes that the violence was unnecessary in most incidents, and that the reason for violent programs is to attract and hold the child for "the real message of commercial television – the advertising message."<sup>98</sup>

## Chapter Eight

# Social Control of The Motion Picture

### The New Medium

In the first half of the twentieth century the motion picture was the most important entertainment medium in Western society, perhaps even throughout the entire world. Certainly, like no other form of entertainment before them, the movies captured the hearts and imagination of an enormous world-wide audience, and exerted a social and cultural influence that transcended their purely recreational intentions.<sup>1</sup> The problem of "movie influence" was recognized early in the medium's development, and resulted in a series of prolonged attacks unprecedented in the history of mass entertainment.

Exactly why did the motion picture cause so much controversy? Why did the moving image on the screen arouse previously lethargic citizens to raise their voices in alarm about the influence the movies were having on society in general, and children in particular? While public outcry on the issue of outside influences on public morality was by no means new, no previous form of entertainment or communication had been subjected to such severe and prolonged criticism. In fact, the movies were something far more than an obnoxious entertainment diversion, and for many they represented in a graphic, tangible form all the dangers and terrors that an increasingly industrialized and urbanized society suggested.

The real basis of the fear of the "power" of the movies lay in the inability of society to understand, and therefore to deal with the new form of social interaction which developed during the nineteenth century as the result of the introduction of what we now call the "mass media." We have already seen the difficulties encountered with the rise of mass literature, and the immense success of the popular press. The movies continued this trend, but this time a new, widened dimension of popularity had been added; in particular, the medium's immense appeal to children.

The introduction of the mass media, first the popular daily newspaper, then the motion picture, followed by radio and finally television, has, in essence, created what Denis McQuail, the sociologist calls "a collectivity unique to modern society." It is basically an aggregate

of individuals "united by a common focus of interest, engaging in an identical form of behaviour, and open to activation towards common ends; yet the individuals involved are unknown to each other, have only a restricted amount of interaction, do not orient their actions to each other and are only loosely organized or lacking in organization."<sup>2</sup>

These characteristics and their implications created social conditions that were so totally new that their existence brought about fundamental changes in the structure and interaction within Western society. The new communications media gave rise to totally new complexes of activity concerned with the manipulation of symbols and personalities, and in the process the mass media inevitably acquired their own status and authority, and were placed in the position of being able to confer prestige and legitimacy on those issues or personalities to which they turned their attention.<sup>3</sup>

A major aspect of the introduction of the mass media, and one that was particularly important to the future of the motion-picture industry, was their ability to bypass the existing channels of social communication and authority structures in the spheres of politics, religion, education, kinship, and economics, and to establish direct contact with the individual. Particularly in the areas of education and religion, parents and teachers became concerned because they felt powerless to prevent the influence of these new communications forms, which seemed so readily accessible to the young. Thus many of the mass media's inroads into existing institutions were initially resisted, but eventually there was a gradual move toward greater accommodation, and finally each of the affected institutions came to use these media for its own purposes.

The motion picture exemplifies this pattern of "accommodation by adoption," for once it was established as a commercial success, and more than just a passing fad, political, educational, and religious institutions quickly adopted it while offering a great deal of praise for its potential in their particular spheres of interest. The paradox, therefore, was that the motion picture was accepted, utilized, and praised on the institutional level, while at the same time the commercial-

entertainment film was viewed with a great deal of suspicion.

### The Need for Social Control Mechanisms

When potential nickelodeon entrepreneurs all across the United States and Canada scrambled to obtain local rights to Mr. Edison's latest invention, they surely did not suspect the emotional issues they were precipitating. However, there were early hints that the moving picture would be the source of some trouble when, in 1896, just two weeks after Edison's Kinetoscope was introduced onto the Atlantic City Boardwalk, authorities objected to the showing of *Dolorita in the Passion Dance*.<sup>4</sup> In the next few years the motion picture, in its various exhibitionary forms, was subjected to constant complaint and harassment, culminating in the dramatic but futile attempt to close all the movie theatres in New York City in 1908.

What became immediately obvious was that local communities were ill-equipped to cope with the "movie problem." While local municipal ordinances were in existence to cover various aspects of theatrical entertainment, these proved to be grossly inadequate for control of the volatile and increasingly ubiquitous new medium. From their emergence as a major entertainment activity in 1896, it would be several years before specific regulations were enacted to deal with "picture parlours" or "nickelodeons." In Britain, the London County Council passed its "Regulations in Premises Licensed by the London County Council: Cinematograph Lanterns" in 1898, but these were concerned solely with safety precautions and covered such matters as the construction and illumination of lanterns and projectors. It was obvious that these regulations were a direct outcome of the disastrous fire the previous summer at the Paris *Bazar de la Charité*, which had been caused by careless management of a movie projector.<sup>5</sup> However, such specific regulations in this early period were unique; New York would not pass its movie-house ordinances until 1913; in Canada the first provincial statutes dealing with movies had been passed in 1911. Certainly, in the period before 1907, there were few regulations aimed specifically at controlling the content of films.

The lack of "censorship ordinances" did not prevent an enormous wave of criticism and indignation which accompanied the development of the motion picture as the major entertainment form in the first decade of the twentieth century. Essentially the criticism can be classified into four broad categories: (1) The child and the influence of the motion picture; (2) the problem of "movie morals and manners"; (3) the health problem caused by filthy conditions in nickelodeons; and (4) educational and religious responses. Here, we are essentially concerned with the first two problems, although all four issues were combined in many complaints.

### Children and the Movies

Much of the attention paid to the motion picture in this early period was due to its extreme attractiveness and accessibility to children, and the nature of the relationship between the child and the medium became the dominating factor in all discussions of motion-picture influence.<sup>6</sup> It is within this context that we must search for the origins of the negative attitudes toward the medium. It is not difficult to understand why the movies were labelled as a "disruptive influence," for they were usually beyond the immediate control of the local community, they dispensed "messages" sometimes at odds with accepted social norms, and supposedly competed with the school for the child's attention. The movies, as was previously indicated, also circumvented the usual socializing agencies, such as the family, the school, and the church, and appealed "directly" to the child. Little wonder then that the movies received close attention from "the guardians of the culture," and that the question of "movie morals" would be a constant issue.

In particular the movies were singled out for their contribution to what appeared to be an increase in juvenile crime. As early as 1905, in England, "three boys caught breaking into a shop said that they had learned how to do it from a cinema show."<sup>7</sup> In 1909, Jane Addams, the famous director of Hull House settlement house in Chicago, in her book *The Spirit of Youth and City Streets*, noted of the movies that they were full of "absurdities which certainly will become the foundation for their [children] working moral codes and the data from which they will judge the proprieties of life." She specifically cited two film plots which aroused her indignation: one involving a robbery and murder, with a ten-year-old boy avenging his father's death; the other involving a robbery and murder of a Chinese laundryman by two young boys in order to feed their starving mother and younger sister. This last murder, Miss Addams claimed, ended with "a prayer of thankfulness for this timely and heaven-sent assistance."<sup>8</sup>

With children making up a very high proportion of the daily audience at picture shows it was only natural that the medium would be accused of encouraging criminal behaviour. While many other "movie habits" were also condemned, the presentation of detailed criminal behaviour on the screen was the most constant source of complaint. In 1912, Robert Grau, the theatre and movie historian, asked the "celebrated detective," Mr. William J. Burns, what he thought about the issue of "movies and crime." Burns did not hesitate in replying:

The mental attitude of the average spectator at a photoplay house is receptive in seeking what might be called a deviation from mental or physical strain. The brain craves for "something different," but the action must divert the mind to new thoughts.

... The ease and alacrity with which the crime is apparently committed requires so little effort that a person with criminal

tendencies would drink in the situation with such a ravenous appetite, owing to the receptive condition of the mind, that the desire to simulate the star character could not be resisted, and almost before he would be aware of it, would have embarked upon a career of crime.<sup>10</sup>

While such pronouncements were common, the "sources" were often questionable. However, some of the warnings against the harmful effects of the motion picture came from highly reputable and influential sources. William Healy, the pioneer in the study of juvenile delinquency, in his seminal work *The Individual Delinquent*, published in 1915, included several case studies concerning children who he alleged had been "influenced" by moving pictures into committing criminal acts. Regarding movies and crime, Healy observed: "The strength of the powers of visualization is to be deeply reckoned with when considering the springs of criminality . . . It is the mental representation of some sort of pictures of himself or others in the criminal that leads the delinquent onward in his path."<sup>11</sup> Healy went on to claim that he had "much evidence" that "movies may be stimulating to the sex instinct," but that the real danger lay in the darkness of the hall where the pictures were shown. For "under cover of dimness evil communications readily pass and bad habits are taught. Moving picture theatres are favorite places for the teaching of homosexual practices." The main hope for preventing these undesirable effects was to be found "in rigorous censorship of perverting pictures, and in radical prosecution of those who produce and deal in obscene and other demoralizing presentations."<sup>12</sup>

Certainly Healy's fear of the darkened movie theatre as a source of moral and even physical danger to the child was not an unusual concern. In an age when much attention is still paid to certain conventions of courtship and sexual behaviour, the sight of a darkened room where the sexes mixed freely and without supervision was sufficient to arouse much moral indignation. The sociologist Donald R. Young, in his pioneer examination of the morality of the motion picture, noted that these fears were not entirely without foundation, for he pointed out that new words and phrases had been coined to meet these new situations, and "movie masher" and "knee flirtation" were added to the American vocabulary at precisely this time.<sup>13</sup>

### The Morals of the Movies

From the outset, Canada because of its geographic location was considered to be merely one of the many "marketing areas" designated by the American film industry. As early as 1911, the great Canadian reformer J.S. Woodsworth had examined the influence of the movies on Canadian life. Discussing the influence of the entertainment medium on immigrants he noted:

The fact is, that in itself the picture business is neither good nor bad. All depends upon the character of the pictures. Some of these are abominably vile and foster crime and immorality of all kinds. The majority are simply cheap and vulgar or silly.<sup>14</sup>

In Britain too, the influence of the movies was considered to be a problem worthy of serious study. In 1917, the British Government published an extensive report on *The Cinema: Its Present Position and Future Possibilities*, which had been undertaken by the National Council of Public Morals. The Report left no doubt about where its compilers stood regarding the importance of the motion picture:

All other forms of recreation appeal only to a section of the community, but the lure of the pictures is universal; while the cheapness and accessibility of the houses make it possible for the masses to indulge in this enjoyment almost to an unlimited extent. In the course of our inquiry we have been much impressed by the evidence brought before us that moving pictures are having a profound influence upon the mental and moral outlook of millions of our young people – an influence the more subtle in that it is subconsciously exercised – and we leave our labours with the deep conviction that no social problem of the day demands more earnest attention. The cinema, under wise guidance, may be made a powerful influence for good; if neglected, if its abuse is unchecked, its potentialities for evil are manifold.<sup>15</sup>

Thus everyone agreed that while the movies had enormous potential as "the art of the masses," in their current, commercialized state they were "capable of evil," as the U.S. Supreme Court was to rule in 1915. The question was what could be done to make the medium more responsive to local norms and values? Many of the movies' particular problems can be attributed to the fact that they depended upon both local and national support. Because of the centralization of the production capability of the motion picture industry into one or two cities in each country, the movies were in essence national media, but in turn susceptible to local pressures and preferences. It was for this reason that local control of the motion picture became a key issue in the United States, Great Britain, and Canada.<sup>16</sup>

### The Origins of Censorship

As we have already noted, no sooner had the first prototypes of the movies been introduced than they were under attack for being "immoral and offensive to public taste." The first official court case involving a movie in the United States was *People v. Doris* in 1897, in which the presiding judge ruled that a pantomime of a bride's wedding night was "an outrage upon public decency."<sup>17</sup> This was but the forerunner of many such rulings as the long struggle for the control of the content of the motion picture began.

While most of the attention paid to movie content in this early period was given to material of a sexual nature, the issue of violence was by no means ignored. As an example, one of the favourite subjects for early film fans, especially in the amusement arcades, was the "fight film," which showed the pugilistic talents of many of the top boxers of the day. This exhibition of prize-fighters as a popular public entertainment did not meet with unanimous approval and ultimately proved to be

an important obstacle in gaining respectability for the new medium. *The New York Times*, in 1897, stated its position on these films quite clearly:

It is not very creditable to our civilization perhaps that an achievement of what is now called the "veriscope" [a form of viewing machine] that has attracted and will attract the widest attention should be the representation of the prizefight. Moralists may deplore the fact that the fight in question "sold more extras" than would a presidential election. But they will have to eradicate a great deal of human nature before they can alter it.<sup>17</sup>

The continued interest in prizefight films eventually resulted in federal legislation to prevent the interstate transportation of such films.

Public interest in films that were violent or depicted life in the raw was clearly evident, even at this early date. Neville Hunnings has noted that there was always a scramble to fake films of executions – "the beheading of a Chinese criminal outside Mukden, the guillotining of four criminals at Béthune, the hanging of a man in Missouri." The advertisement for the latter in 1898 noted: "The set of slides illustrating the gruesome spectacle have been pronounced 'good,' and these are to be duplicated and public exhibition given in various towns."<sup>18</sup> Hunnings also mentions various other complaints concerning "the portrayal of dead victims of mining disasters, of big heavy-weight boxing matches, of the hare coursing at the Waterloo Cup, of the operation on a woman at Baden. Great indignation was aroused by a Danish film which showed two lions eating a horse, then being pursued and shot in a lion hunt."<sup>19</sup>

Even when the concept of "narrative" film developed after 1900, much of the content of these early story films was concerned with violence. It is more than symbolic that the most important film of this period – Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* – was concerned with robbery, violence, and death. The closing shot in this film is of a robber turning toward the audience and firing his revolver into the camera! According to contemporary accounts, audiences ducked, but enjoyed this "shock."

The use of violent themes in early movies bears a direct relationship to the thematic explorations of stage melodramas which were extremely popular in the late nineteenth century. In his important book, *Stage to Screen*, Nicholas Vardac has clearly shown that the movies were a direct descendant of the melodrama, taking over the audience from the live entertainment, and continuing the audience's "desire for pictorial realism." Vardac notes: "Audiences immediately identified the cinema, from its first showings, with the nineteenth-century vogue of pictorial theatre. It was readily established as the most realistic medium yet available to the theatrical arts. The stage might represent reality but the motion picture could photograph it."<sup>20</sup> The success of story films after Porter's pioneering efforts was also due to the audience's identification with the plot of these films. As famed film historian Lewis Jacobs noted:

The Americans rarely left their own backyards and streets when they were technically able to do so. Fairy tales, fantasies, storybook romances, were far removed from their immediate interests. Subject matter was derived from American life – from the exploits of the policeman and burglar, cowboy and factory worker, farmer and country girl, clerk and politician, drunkard and servant girl, store keeper and mechanic.<sup>21</sup>

British film historian Alexander Walker has suggested that there were valid social reasons for the wholehearted acceptance of much of this morbid content:

It is worth emphasizing that the sentimentality of the plots, which jars today, was then very much a fact of life for nickelodeon audiences from the back streets or immigrant ghettos where drunkenness bred brutish parents, long-lost off-spring were the common price of having to leave one's homeland, and the dying babies of melodrama had their statistical reality in the infant mortality rate.<sup>22</sup>

It was however, precisely this type of content which seemed to bother the growing army of detractors of the medium. In an article published in the *Review of Reviews* in 1908, an anonymous critic complained:

One's regret for such exhibitions is deepened by the reflection that just as much time and effort have been spent in preparing the films for these pictures, as would have been in producing others of a more desirable character . . . And all the thought, time and energy have been expended for the portrayal of the realism of bloodshed, crime and brutality.<sup>23</sup>

Such sentiments were popular, and combined with the obvious popularity of entertainment, and the unprecedented growth of audiences, led to increasing alarm among those concerned with safeguarding the public's morality.

### Movie Censorship - The United States

Once the movie houses became an accepted feature of the urban scene, the first official attempts were made to place the movies under a form of permanent local control. In 1907 an editorial appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* which attacked the city's motion picture houses. This editorial noted of the current films from being exhibited:

[They are] . . . without a redeeming feature to warrant their existence . . . ministering to the lowest passions of childhood . . . proper to suppress them at once . . . influence is wholly vicious . . . They are hopelessly bad.<sup>24</sup>

As a result of this editorial and other resolutions presented to the Chicago City Council, an ordinance was passed which gave the city the power to censor all films through the Superintendent of Police. In an important legal contest the ordinance was held valid in 1909 by the Supreme Court of Illinois, and yet later by the Supreme Court of the United States.<sup>25</sup> Chicago had taken the bold and somewhat "un-American" step of instituting official prior censorship, something no other medium of communication had been subjected to since the drafting of the Constitution.

Though film censorship began in Chicago, it was in New York that the bolder step was taken on December

24, 1908, when Mayor George B. McClellan ordered the police to close every movie house in that city. This was later set aside by a court injunction, but in an attempt to forestall any further such action in the future, the industry prevailed upon the People's Institute, a body concerned with social research and adult education, to organize a citizens' committee which would preview all motion pictures before they were shown in New York cinemas. This committee, in March 1909, became the National Board of Censorship of Motion Pictures, later changing its name in 1915 to the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, a name which it retains to this day.

From the first the aim of the organization was not that of true "censorship," but as film historian Terry Ramsaye indicated, "'censorship' became a necessary word, because to satisfy the public and official mind of the day the naughty, naughty motion picture had to be spanked on the wrist."<sup>26</sup> The basic philosophy of the National Board was based on the principle that the motion-picture screen had a right to the same First Amendment freedom accorded to all the other media. Because it was difficult to establish precisely what was "moral" or "immoral" the board relied on the concept that "where questions of taste and morals overlap, . . . public opinion, which is the compound of all tastes and all ideas of morals is the only competent judge of the screen, and that there can be no popular functioning of public opinion unless freedom of the screen exists in order that the public may judge what shall be presented to it . . ."<sup>27</sup>

The mechanism established by the Board to carry out its vast task was to engage a large number of volunteers, and a limited staff of paid workers for routine duties. The Board extracted a "fee" from each filmmaker for "examining" his film, and "suggesting" possible changes. However, the Board had no legal powers to demand such changes, and its financial dependency upon the film industry led to many critical attacks. It is important to note that although the Board depended indirectly upon the filmmakers for the bulk of its support, it was never an official arm of the motion-picture industry. In the long run the NBR failed to stem the criticisms aimed at "objectionable" films, although through its education programs it did do much to make the public aware of the "better" films. Nevertheless, in the period before 1922, the NBR represented the major attempt at creating a "public voice" in the American motion picture scene.

After 1922, and the creation of the centralized industry association – The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), otherwise known as the Hays Office – the industry attempted a more organized appeal to the public for the right of self-regulation.<sup>28</sup> After twelve years of trying desperately to convince the studios to follow his suggestions, Will H. Hays, the President of the MPPDA, was still unable to obtain adherence to the various codes of

regulation which he had established. In 1932, nearly forty national religious organizations and educational groups had adopted resolutions calling for some form of federal regulation of the motion picture industry. In fact, the industry resisted real reform until a unique combination of circumstances and ingredients – the arrival of sound, the Depression, the Hays Office, and the Roman Catholic Legion of Decency – finally caused the industry to adjust its position to accommodate many of the reforms so long sought.

Hays had tried various methods of self-regulation during the period 1922-1933, including the examination of all scripts before filming began, advising the studios about the problems likely to be encountered from state and local censors, and even the establishment of a set of "Don'ts and Be Carefuls" which were supposed to be adhered to, but, in fact, seldom were. Eventually, faced with increasing pressures from the Catholic Legion of Decency, and the financial squeeze of the Depression, the motion-picture industry in 1934 finally adopted a *Code* which proved to be an enforceable means of self-regulation. The infamous *Production Code* (often known by its administrative title, The Breen Office), became the foundation for over thirty years of viable self-regulation, although film historians now tend to see it as a restrictive and confining stranglehold on the industry's creative development.

In substance the *Code* tried to encompass all the problems previously encountered, but, even more important, it gave public reaffirmation of the MPPDA's desire to meet its public obligations. The *Code* was based on the premise that motion pictures as entertainment and art affected the moral life of a people, and that therefore the medium was charged with special moral responsibilities because of its wide appeal and availability. Therefore it followed that "latitude given to film material cannot, in consequence, be as wide as the latitude given to book material." The "Preamble" section of the *Code* also compared the motion picture to newspapers and plays in this context, and even noted the crucial problems of community differences in one section: "Small communities: remote from sophistication and from the hardening process which often takes place in the ethical and moral standards of groups in larger cities, are easily and readily reached by any sort of film."<sup>29</sup> It is important to note that although the *Code* was actually introduced in 1930, it was not until 1934, and after the emergence of the Legion of Decency, that Will Hays was able to secure the necessary "teeth" to enforce adherence to the *Code* by the various studios. The spectre of a continuous boycott by the powerful Catholic group had proven to be the necessary factor which Hays had sought for so long.

The Legion of Decency was founded in 1934 for the express purpose of putting pressure on the film industry to "mend its ways." Using the full machinery of the Catholic Church, a large number of Catholics and of other denominations signed a pledge which said in part:

I wish to join the Legion of Decency, which condemns vile and unwholesome moving pictures. I unite with all who protest against them as a grave menace to youth, to home life, to country and to religion . . .

Considering these evils, I hereby promise to remain away from all motion pictures except those which do not offend decency and Christian morality. I promise further to secure as many members as possible for the Legion of Decency. I make this protest in a spirit of self respect, and with the conviction that the American public does not demand filthy pictures, but clean entertainment and educational features.

The Catholic Church, with its intensive campaign against what it considered to be essentially immoral doctrines prevalent in motion pictures, had succeeded in focusing public attention on this social problem to an extent never before accomplished by any pressure group. Whereas the Protestant groups had for twenty-five years taken the initiative in the fight against the encroaching social influence of the motion picture, they had failed to make any real or permanent gains; however, the Catholic Church was able to accomplish its appointed task within one year. In the long run, it has been estimated that nearly eleven million Catholics, and countless others from Protestant denominations signed the pledge.

The Legion functioned by publishing lists of films which had been "morally rated" and making them available to anyone or any group that was interested. These lists, prepared weekly, were made available to the diocesan presses and carried by most of them; or they were posted in the vestibules of churches and on bulletin boards of parochial schools. In this way almost every parishioner was reached by the Legion, enabling the Catholic Church to communicate its motion-picture preferences directly to almost twenty million Americans. Thus it was able to combat the problem of variations in local standards by imposing one "national" standard for all Catholics. Nevertheless, local pressure was still the key to the operation of the Legion — pressure on the Catholic congregation and pressure on the individual exhibitors. This meant that the Catholic Church was able to accomplish by "institutional force" what other groups such as the National Board of Review had been unable to achieve, even though the Board's attempts to involve local communities were very similar to the goals of the Legion.

It is important to note that the Legion did not see itself as a "censor." The official position was that the rating activity provided "effective guidance" to the church's followers by telling them which films were more or less apt to be "occasions of sin." The Legion saw its function primarily as that of a pressure group, whose aim was to represent Catholic opinion and thereby assist in maintaining the effectiveness of the industry's self-regulatory bodies. The Hays Office continued to be the only source of direct authoritative control over the industry's product, although of course the many state and local censorship boards still

continued to function, as did the National Board of Review.

### The Payne Fund Studies

It was not entirely a coincidence that in 1933, when the Catholic Legion of Decency made its move, that there appeared a series of published research studies, known as the Payne Fund Studies, which examined the role and impact of the motion picture in greater depth than ever before. In 1928, the Reverend William H. Short, the executive director of the Motion Picture Research Council, secured a grant of \$200,000 to carry out a nationwide study to determine the degrees of influence and effect of films upon children and adolescents. The task of actual investigation was given to a group of social scientists — psychologists, sociologists, and educators — who were under the direction of Dr. W.W. Charters, the director of the Bureau of Educational Research, Ohio State University. The actual field research was conducted over the four-year period from 1929 to 1933, and the first volume appeared in 1933.<sup>30</sup>

While each study was a self-contained research work, the significant findings were conveniently (and often simplistically) summarized in the volume entitled *Motion Pictures and Youth*, by Professor Charters. In discussing the overall design of the studies, Charters developed a formula, which in simplified form stated:

$$\text{General Influence} \times \text{Content} \times \text{Attendance} = \text{Total Influence}$$

The formula as thus computed was open to criticism, but it was never applied in the final assessment in any meaningful manner. The formula did, however, influence the design of the individual studies, which focused on such areas as attendance, content of motion pictures, the mores depicted on the screen relative to accepted social standards, the retention of information, the ability to change attitudes, the effects upon sleep and health, the emotional effects, the relationship between motion pictures and juvenile delinquency, and even how children could be taught to discriminate between "good" and "bad" cinema.

The studies utilized four general research methods to obtain their results: (1) the strictly physiological experimental procedure, used in the studies on emotions and the effects of movies on sleep; (2) the "paper and pencil" testing technique; (3) the use of rating scales; and (4) the questionnaire, life story, and interview methods. In order to meet the objectives set for this pioneering inquiry many novel research techniques had to be devised. As an example, one researcher measured the immediate effects of exciting movie scenes by the use of the psychogalvanic reflex, while another devised a method of studying the after-effects of the motion picture by measuring divergences from the normal motility of children during sleep.

The studies conducted by the questionnaire or autobiographical methods were the most contentious, for they attempted to examine the difficult problem of

the effects of the motion picture upon conduct and ideas. In Herbert Blumer's examination of movies and social conduct the question of the medium's general influence was brought into focus. This particular study was possibly the most important of all; but it was also the most "suspect" in its finding, because it was based entirely on motion-picture "biographies" from college students, office workers, and factory workers. After ensuring that several checks and balances were placed into the research procedure, Blumer concluded that the movies did indeed have a deep and permanent psychological effect on many people - both adults and youths. The motion picture provided a source for rich fantasy and imitation, especially among adolescents, and it offered a means of "emotional possession" during the actual performance, and even afterward, which could profoundly influence an individual's conduct and philosophy of life. This constant exposure to a wide variety of emotional experiences was bound to have a disintegrating effect on many people, especially those who had not yet developed a sufficient emotional detachment or an "adult discount" which permitted them to place these vicarious experiences in proper perspective.

Taken as a whole, the most striking feature of the conclusions reached in the series of studies was the wide range of "individual differences" evidenced in the subjects examined. Factors such as age, sex, personal experience, and cultural backgrounds such as home and family, neighbourhood, community standards, social and economic status - all these contributed to the individual's response to the motion picture. Throughout the studies there was a note of cautious interpretation in an attempt to present the material as objectively as possible.

Unfortunately, the intentions of the original researchers were thwarted by the early publication of *Our Movie Made Children*, a popularization of the studies written by journalist Henry James Forman with the full cooperation of Dr. Charters. While there is no denying that the studies as a group showed an underlying but subtle hostility toward the immense socializing influence of the movies, Forman's book was a blatant attack on the industry, and pointedly suggested that some form of major outside control be placed on the motion-picture industry.

The motion picture industry was obviously disturbed by the published findings of the Payne Fund Studies, and particularly by the public reception of Forman's book. We do know that in March, 1933, the full board of directors of the MPPDA agreed to a complete renewal of their original 1922 dedication to "establish and maintain the highest possible moral and artistic standards," and gave an oral promise that more films of a "better" quality would be forthcoming.

Exactly how much influence the Payne Fund studies had in bringing about a stricter enforcement of self-regulation is very difficult to estimate, although their publi-

cation must have had a catalytic significance. Certainly their major findings, mainly in the form of digests of Forman's book, were widely published and in many cases formed the background data for strong attacks on the motion picture industry. Women's groups, in particular, responded to the results, and banded together to form the Film Estimate Board of National Organizations. And it was also clear that the wide dissemination of the Payne Fund findings did influence the Catholic Church in its crusade, although here too, the evidence for such a connection is not conclusive.

The Payne Fund Studies, while they can be criticized on purely methodological grounds, nevertheless were important documents, not only for what they described, but also for what they represented. In many ways their publication symbolized the culmination of the long struggle to make the motion picture industry more responsive to certain public attitudes. More important, their findings tended to confirm some of the suspicions of reformers who for years had counselled that uncontrolled influence of the medium had created an undesirable and dangerous socializing force.

#### Official Censorship in the U.S.

It was at the state level that official censorship was most effectively enforced in the U.S. The first state to legislate official censorship of the movies was Pennsylvania, which created a board of censors in 1911. This was followed by Ohio in 1913, Kansas in 1914, New York and Virginia in 1922. The institution of official censorship legislation at this higher level of government did not augur well for the film makers, and almost immediately after state censorship first appeared the industry decided to challenge the concept of prior censorship in the courts.

In the case of *Mutual Film Corporation v. Ohio*,<sup>31</sup> the United States Supreme Court handed down a decision that was to have a far-reaching consequence for the young industry. In a unanimous decision, speaking through Justice McKenna, the Court dismissed the Detroit-based company's complaint against the Ohio prior-censorship law. The distributing company had contended that the Ohio law violated the First Amendment. Nevertheless the Court considered the company's charges unsound and they were dismissed, while the First Amendment claim was ignored. The most important aspect of the decision was the Court's refusal to construe the Constitution of Ohio to include the motion-picture medium.

The Court therefore effectively relegated motion pictures to the same entertainment category as carnival sideshows. Their decision stated in part:

It cannot be put out of view that the exhibition of moving pictures is a business pure and simple, originated and conducted for profit, like other spectacles, not to be regarded, nor intended to be regarded as part of the press of the country or as organs of public opinion. They are mere representations of events, of ideas and sentiments published or known; vivid,

useful, and entertaining, no doubt, but . . . capable of evil, having power for it, the greater because of their attractiveness and manner of exhibition.<sup>32</sup>

Professor Richard S. Randall has made the point that “once the Court found movies not to be speech, it was unnecessary to take up the claim of federal protection.”<sup>33</sup> In fact, the question of First Amendment protection was premature, for it was not then regarded as binding upon the states. It was only in 1925 that the decision handed down in *Gitlow v. New York* established the principle that the states must be mindful of free speech and press as set forth in the Constitution of the United States. A close scrutiny of the Supreme Court’s decision reveals several dubious premises which would not stand up today. First, the view that the motion picture was “a business pure and simple” ignored the growth of the film as art. Second, the Court suggested that movies were merely a spectacle such as carnival sideshows or circuses, and therefore were not subject to the protection of the free-speech clauses in state constitutions. The basis for this judgment lies in the traditional judicial suspicion of the arts. While it was obvious to the Court that the motion picture could be a medium for spreading ideas or education, in this judgment only its entertainment role was considered.

The third of the dubious suppositions is the most difficult to substantiate, but was potentially the most far-reaching in its implications. Much of the Court’s hostility shown in the final verdict was predicated on the belief that this powerful new medium, if misused by unscrupulous, commercially minded men, possessed a “capacity for evil” against which every community should be given the right to shield itself. The decision therefore had a profound effect upon the industry and its relationship to the local community, for it was construed to mean that motion picture censorship was permissible under the Constitution, and many state courts would uphold similar censorship laws on these grounds. Thus the whole issue of prior censorship was given an aura of judicial approval. Obviously the Supreme Court of the United States was not yet sure of how to deal with a mass medium which manifested the appealing characteristics of motion picture, and it therefore gave the most conservative decision possible under the circumstances. In all fairness to the justices it must be pointed out that very little was known at this time about the effect of the mass media in general, and the motion picture in particular, and the strong opposition to the entertainment medium already obvious in certain quarters must have had some residual influence on the Court. Certainly, the Supreme Court was not prepared to give free licence to such an unknown factor. Unfortunately this decision, and the premises upon which it was based, would result in much abuse of the privilege of prior censorship, and eventually shift the focus from a concern for the public’s morals to a concern for its social and political thought as well.

It would not be until 1952 that the Supreme Court agreed to hear another case involving motion-picture censorship. This was the celebrated *Miracle* decision (*Burstyn v. Wilson*), which on May 26, 1952, reversed the 1915 *Mutual Film* ruling.<sup>34</sup> After ignoring the issue for thirty-seven years, the Supreme Court had at long last recognized the motion picture as an important medium for the communication of ideas, and therefore entitled to the same protection under the First Amendment as speech and press. *The Miracle* was a fairly obscure Italian film with a religious theme which had run afoul of New York State authorities, who felt that it was “blasphemous.” The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously reversed the New York decision, and Justice Clark, speaking for the Court, noted that “. . . it cannot be doubted that motion pictures are a significant medium for the communication of ideas. They may affect public attitudes and behavior in a variety of ways, ranging from direct espousal of a political or social doctrine to the subtle shaping of thought which characterizes all artistic expression.”<sup>35</sup>

Despite this breakthrough, the Supreme Court was still very cautious. Clark was careful to point out that movies were still not to be afforded the same full constitutional protection as books, newspapers, and other forms of publication. He observed: “It does not follow that the Constitution requires absolute freedom to exhibit every motion picture of every kind at all times and all places. Nor does it follow that motion pictures are necessarily subject to the precise rules governing any other particular method of expression. Each tends to present its own peculiar problems.”<sup>36</sup>

What was clear from this historic incident was that the achievement of free speech in the motion picture would take more than court decisions, and restrictions on censors; it would also require a desire on the part of the film industry to make the most of its new-found freedom to create the “mature and responsible” cinema it had promised for so long.

In the nine-year period after *Burstyn*, the Supreme Court heard six further motion picture cases, and in each one the powers of the censors were further reduced. In 1961, in the case of *Times Film Corp. v. Chicago*, the Supreme Court examined the fundamental question of the permissibility of local censorship. On January 23, 1961, in a close 5 to 4 decision, the Court upheld the city of Chicago’s right to license films. Justice Clark, speaking for the majority, saw the distributor’s complaint as involving the claim that constitutional protection “includes complete and absolute freedom to exhibit, at least once, any and every kind of motion picture.” This would automatically void the city ordinance requiring prior permission. Obscenity was clearly not protected by the Constitution, and to accept this argument against prior censorship would be to strip a state of “all constitutional power to prevent, in the most effective fashion, the utterance of this class of speech.”<sup>37</sup> Clark also noted that the movies’ “capacity

for evil may be relevant in determining the permissible scope of community control," and that movies were not "necessarily subject to the precise rules governing any other particular method of expression."<sup>38</sup> However, the Justice was careful to point out that the Court was not holding that censors should be granted the power to prevent exhibition of any film they found distasteful.

In a long, rambling dissent on behalf of the minority opinion, Chief Justice Warren did not question the right to censor, but noted that Chicago ordinance offered no procedural safeguards, and there was no trial on the issue before restraint became effective. Also, the act of censorship itself was considered to be wrong, in that the censor's decisions were insulated from the public and subject to no defence on the part of the film owner. The most important part of Warren's dissent, however, was his challenge that the majority opinion had not even attempted to justify why motion pictures should be treated any differently from other media, to the extent that they should be denied protection from prior restraint or censorship. Even if they had greater impact than other media, this was not a sufficient basis for subjecting them to greater suppression.

The immediate reaction to the Court's decision in the *Times* case was mainly negative. *The New York Times* favoured the opinion of the minority judges, who "took the sounder view and the one that in the long run will prevail."<sup>39</sup> Film critic Bosley Crowther, long the champion of freedom for the movies, commented that "the effect is to continue the ancient stigma of motion pictures as a second-class, subordinate art."<sup>40</sup> However, the *Times* decision did not result in the expected flood of new censorship legislation. Instead, the 1960s was a decade of unprecedented increase in "freedom of expression" in the American cinema. Not only sexual freedom was obvious, but an increase in graphic violence became a major point of contention as the beleaguered studios sought to outdo each other for the dwindling box-office dollar.

What became clear was that the United States courts had no legal method to deal with increased violent content. However, sexual material was still subject to examination under the "obscenity" definition, and this left the door open for further Supreme Court activity, although the end result is by no means clearcut. In June 1973, the Supreme Court once again entered the picture with a series of rulings which served to create even more confusion in the movie industry. "This is an area in which there are few eternal verities," wrote Chief Justice Warren E. Burger. He announced a new definition of obscenity and consequently presented a possibly disastrous situation for the movie industry by opening the way for a return to conditions resembling those of 1915.

In a complex of five decisions, the Court's conservative majority, prevailing by a one-vote margin, opened the way for states and federal government to limit further the distribution of sexually oriented material

deemed to be offensive by local community standards. The majority held that:

To fall into the category of obscene material which states can suppress or regulate without violating the First Amendment, material no longer has to be found utterly without redeeming social value, but only to lack serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value.

The question of the offensiveness of material can be judged against local, not national, community standards.<sup>41</sup>

After this decision, the film industry, predictably, was in an uproar. Jack Valenti, the President of the MPAA (the MPAA had altered its name to the Motion Picture Association of America in 1945), noted that "the great, artistic, serious filmmakers will be harassed and possibly convicted because of the lack of clear guidelines."<sup>42</sup> Valenti had every reason to be apprehensive, for while the Court's ruling was clearly aimed at destroying the commercial exploitation of hard-core pornographic films, many local and state authorities saw this as an opportunity to legally attack serious, well-intentioned films. An early indication of this came two weeks later, when the Georgia Supreme Court ruled that the critically acclaimed film *Carnal Knowledge* was "obscene." Valenti declared that the MPAA would pursue to the highest court in the land the legal freedom for responsible filmmakers to tell their story without the harassment which was inevitable under these rulings.

In June, 1974, the Supreme Court ruled, in a unanimous decision, that *Carnal Knowledge* was not obscene. Justice Rehnquist, writing for the Court, noted: "Our own view of the film satisfies us that *Carnal Knowledge* could not be found under the [Court's 1973] standards to depict sexual conduct in a patently offensive way." The problem was that the justices still offered no clear guidelines to what was obscene, and Justice Brennan pointed out the ridiculous situation that "one cannot say with certainty that material is obscene until at least five members of this Court, applying inevitably obscure standards, have pronounced it so."<sup>43</sup>

After nearly sixty years the motion picture was no nearer achieving freedom from legal restraint than it had been in 1915. While the grounds for censorship had been gradually refined down to a test for "obscenity," the vagueness of the concept, and the fact that its application was to be left to local communities, each applying their own standards, could only encourage continued harassment. The current situation will mean a constant stream of censorship ("obscenity") cases before the Supreme Court, until such time as the justices issue firm and clear guidelines; or finally agree that the movies should be freed totally from the burden of censorship.

### The Attempt to Classify

With the obvious decline in the *Production Code*, the question of "classification" invariably arose. In 1968, the Supreme Court of the United States handed down

two decisions which had a profound effect on the movie industry's decision to attempt adoption of a classification scheme. In *Interstate v. Dallas*, the Court invalidated an age classification because of the vagueness of the standards, but hinted that age classification systems with more tightly drawn standards might survive the application of constitutional tests.<sup>44</sup> On the same day, the Court ruled in *Ginsberg v. New York* that a New York statute which prohibited the sale to minors of material that young people would find obscene was legal, even though the same material could not be considered obscene if adults were to read it.<sup>45</sup> Thus the *Dallas* case, if examined in the context of the *Ginsberg* ruling, clearly allows cities and states to attempt movie control through more tightly drawn classification laws.

However, as lawyer Louis Nizer pointed out to the MPAA, the way was now open for every city or state in the country to devise its own classification system, and the industry would be advised to introduce its own system. The president of the MPAA, Jack Valenti, after long negotiations with various distributors and theatre-owner organizations, eventually developed a system acceptable to all. The ratings system was designed to do away with the old *Code* and its prohibitive restrictions, and to allow the filmmaker "unprecedented creative freedom, while at the same time maintaining a system of 'self-regulation' that would ease the pressures for some form of government classification."<sup>46</sup> Under the plan, there were no restrictions in thematic content or treatment of any film, but the final result would be assigned one of four ratings: G (all ages admitted); M (suggested for mature audiences – adults and young mature people); R (restricted; children under sixteen required an accompanying parent or adult); or X (no one under sixteen admitted). In early 1970, the M rating was changed to PG (all ages admitted; parental guidance suggested), as the M tended to be confusing. At the same time the R and X age limits were upped to seventeen.

With the introduction of the ratings system, the old Production Code Administration was replaced by the MPAA Code and Rating Administration (CARA). There are seven permanent members of CARA based in Los Angeles, who examine both scripts and the final films. Despite Valenti's contention that the ratings system was working well, several groups have come out in opposition to CARA. On the one side are filmmakers who are concerned with the "moral labelling" of the creations; on the other stand the groups who are continually concerned with the growing explicitness of violence and sex in the movies. On May 18, 1971, both the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures and the National Council of Churches' Broadcasting and Film Commission withdrew their support from the MPAA because of "the growing number of films unsuitable for the young, coupled with the clearly unrealistic ratings handed out . . ."<sup>47</sup> It was specifically the increasing number of films exploiting sex and violence

that were given PG ratings which aroused these religious groups. Writing in the Catholic weekly *America*, Philip C. Rule noted that the MPAA and its ratings were no more equipped to handle the current movie content than the MPPDA had been with the *Code*. Rule prophesied ominously, "It all appears to be building up to something: either a change in film fare, a better and more effective rating system or some form of control from outside the industry [censorship]."<sup>48</sup>

### Film Censorship in Britain

As we had seen earlier, opposition to films in Britain began as early as 1896. By 1909, the fledgling industry saw the benefits to be derived from a centralized authority; not only would it remove the difficulty of having to deal with a large number of local authorities, but it would also "kill off" the smaller exhibitors who apparently were responsible for many of the difficulties. The resulting Cinematograph Act of 1909 was intended solely to establish fire precautions. However, local authorities thought otherwise. As Neville Hunnings noted:

As soon as its duty to issue licenses to cinemas came into effect on Jan. 1, 1910, the London County Council took the attitude that applications should be treated in the same way as applications for music hall licences . . . Other local authorities gradually followed this example, until August 1910 the rule was fairly widespread throughout the country.<sup>49</sup>

The industry, now alarmed at the unexpected extension of legal power, decided that the solution lay in the appointment of a trade censor. Although the Home Secretary refused to give active support, pointing out that the statutory powers lay with local authorities, the industry passed a motion in July 1912 that "censorship is necessary and advisable." In November the formation of the British Board of Film Censors was announced, to be under the Presidency of G.A. Redford who had much experience as Examiner of Plays for the Lord Chamberlain. Redford and his four examiners started work on January 1, 1913, and he was able to announce that all films released in Britain after March 1 would bear the censor's certificate.

Submission of films to the Board was purely voluntary, and many companies ignored it. A more important weakness, however, remained the complete autonomy of the local authorities.<sup>50</sup> Guy Phelps in his history of film censorship in Britain indicates that by the end of 1915 only thirty-five councils had adopted clauses stipulating that all films to be shown must have the censor's certificate. The rest, including all the important local councils, retained their full powers. When it became apparent that this dual system was not working, the industry and the local authorities made a renewed plea to the Home Office for the appointment of an official censor. A new Home Secretary was more sympathetic, and accordingly a plan was drawn up; however, a change of government led to the cancellation of the scheme, and a reaffirmation of the powers of the local

authorities. As Phelps notes: "Thus narrowly was a development averted which would have changed the whole history of film censorship in this country."<sup>51</sup>

It was shortly after this that the Report of the Cinema Commission of Inquiry was published in 1917. "It cleared the film industry of most of the charges then being laid against it and reported favourably on the work of the BBFC. With this support and under a new and vigorous President, T.P. O'Connor (Redford having died in 1916), the Board was able to consolidate its position."<sup>52</sup> The most important development, however, was the adoption of the influential Middlesex and London County Councils of the Board's certificate as a requirement for their licences. "This development finally convinced the trade that the Board was a viable proposition, and that with the full cooperation of members it could be made to work."<sup>53</sup>

The Board, from the first, had issued two certificates: the "U" Category (Universal) indicated that the film was specially recommended for children's matinee performances, while "A" (Public) implied that the film was more suitable for adults. The LCC however, radically changed this system, stipulating that no "young person" would be admitted unless the film was certified for "public" admission, or accompanied by an adult. The film industry protested vigorously at this restriction, but to no avail, and the LCC's example was soon followed by other authorities. In 1923, the Home Office suggested to all local authorities that they should adopt the LCC rules, and by the end of 1924 most of them had done so. It was these conditions that formed the basis for film censorship in Britain. "A few local authorities, most notably Manchester, refused to acknowledge it and applied their own rules, but in general it was accepted, and pressures for a radical revision have been rare."<sup>54</sup>

The local authorities continue to play an important role in film censorship in Britain. Not only do they keep a wary eye on film societies, but much of their energy is devoted to operating the classifications of the BBFC, to examining films which had not been examined by the Board or which had been objected to by members of the public, or to consultation with each other and with the Home Office in attempts to obtain greater control over the activities of the Board itself.

A new Cinematograph Act was introduced in 1952, and so well entrenched was the censorship system by this time that at no point during the parliamentary debates was it seriously suggested that any machinery other than that based on the local councils and the BBFC was possible or desirable. The new Act did abolish all reference to "safety and inflammability," and substituted "regulation" as the key concept underlying censorship.

In 1950, a Committee of Inquiry (The Wheare Committee) recommended that the Censor Board introduce a new "X" certificate for adults only. This was done in January, 1951. This step was opposed by the three main cinema circuits – Rank's Odeon and

Gaumont circuits and A.B.C. As the receipts of these circuits depended to a large extent on regular patronage by family audiences, they feared that "X" films would disrupt the attendance pattern and cause a fall in the box office. After some reluctant tests, the circuits proved to be correct, and Rank announced that it would not book any "X" films in the future, while A.B.C. stated that it would book only outstanding "X" films. Eventually the "X" film lost its disastrous reputation, and so too the Board gradually changed its attitudes to reflect the more mature cinema of the 1950s and 1960s.

In the mid-1970s, Britain still has a fairly strict film censorship, and despite the inroads of "private film clubs," the hard-core pornographic material available in the United States has not been allowed into Britain. In the last few years the BBFC has come under increasing attack, and only last year the Secretary of the Board, Stephen Murphy, resigned after disagreements with the trade. There is, however, no serious threat to abolish film censorship in the near future.

### Film Censorship in Ontario

#### The History of the Board

The Province of Ontario first enacted film censorship legislation in 1911, when on March 24, "The Theatres and Cinematographs Act" was passed. (While Ontario's claim to have enacted the first statute to provide specifically for film censorship is historically correct, both Manitoba and Quebec passed similar, if less tidy, legislation on exactly the same day. Quebec's 1911 "Act respecting exhibitions of moving pictures" had an antecedent in earlier legislation governing "all public exhibitions of monsters, idiots or other imbecile or deformed persons, tending to endanger public safety . . ." which had been enacted in 1887.) The Ontario statute does, however, represent the first major attempt to implement social control of the cinema, and was a direct outcome of the increasing clamour for such legislation by reformist organizations such as the Social and Moral Reform Association. The Premier of Ontario, the Honourable Sir James P. Whitney, noted during the debate on the proposed legislation that these pro-censorship groups were genuine in their expression of fear of the evils inherent in motion pictures and the possible influence on the young. This was a common sentiment at the time, and similar concerns were currently being expressed throughout the United States and Britain. (The State of Pennsylvania enacted censorship legislation in 1911, and the British Board of Film Censors was created in 1913.)

The Ontario 1911 Act was deliberately broad, and gave the Lieutenant Governor the power to make regulations "for prohibiting films to be exchanged [distributed] or exhibited," and also provided for the creation of a Board of Censors "composed of three persons who shall have the power to permit the exhibition or absolutely to prohibit or reject all films which it is proposed to use . . . and to suspend for cause

the licence of any operator [projectionist]." The Act also allowed for an appeal process, and provision was made for films to be stamped by the Board of Censors after they had been approved; and such stamps had to be visible on the screen when the films were shown. There was also an interesting, but unfortunately short-lived clause providing that "no exhibition of such stamped film shall be prohibited by any police officer, or constable or other person, on account of anything contained in such film." This section was abolished in 1914, presumably because local authorities' opinion tended to conflict with the opinions of the Board of Censors based in Toronto. (This is an important problem, which is examined below.)

On June 27, 1911, the first Ontario Censorship Board was formed under the chairmanship of George G. Armstrong, and reported to the Provincial Treasurer. The evaluative criteria provided to the Board merely noted that "No picture of an immoral or obscene nature or depicting a crime or reproducing a prize fight shall be exhibited." In 1915, the composition of the Board was changed from three to "such number of persons as may be deemed necessary," and additional assistants were added to the one existing inspector. Obviously, the increase in the number of exhibition sites throughout the Province necessitated this move.

By 1919, the increasing demand for women's rights led to newspaper criticism of the Censor Board's reluctance to appoint a female Board member on a permanent basis. The result of this outcry was that the Board found itself deluged with applications from women all over Ontario; by the end of the one year one woman was appointed as a permanent member. In 1921, when the Board was once again reconstituted under the Chairmanship of Major A.S. Hamilton, two of the five permanent members were women. Undoubtedly this was in recognition not only of the key role that women played as patrons of the movie houses, but also of the increasing importance of women's groups in the fight to place the movies under more stringent regulation.

In 1921, Major Hamilton and his fellow censors attempted to articulate the criteria upon which they based their evaluations of the films submitted to them. The resultant pamphlet, *Standards of the Ontario Board of Censors of Motion Pictures and its Field of Work*, is a fascinating historical document, which clearly illustrates the primary concern of reformers about the supposed "power" of the movies. The "general policy" noted that the Board "realizes the educational and recreational value of Moving Pictures, and will endeavour to save all pictures possible." The problem of regional variations in tastes and values was also recognized in that "it will try to make its judgments from the standpoint of a normal Ontario audience." The pamphlet then detailed a series of situations such as "display of flags, cruelty to animals, firearms, crime and arson, insanity and death, costumes and nudity, sex, advertising and drugs," with

suggestions as to how these should be handled to avoid censorship. The last paragraph, "The Future" noted that "if the above standards are adhered to . . . [then it will] . . . bring the Moving Pictures to a higher level in the Province of Ontario." These standards were sent to all distributors with instructions to censor films before submission, but this apparently had little effect because the Board still found it necessary to reject 67 films in 1921.

There was very little change in the wording of the Act between 1927 and 1953, when a new "Theatres Act" was entirely recast and brought up to date. This new Act extended the power of the Board of Censors, and made provision for the establishment of licensing fees, and the formal approval of building and alteration plans for movie theatres. The Theatres Act was amended in 1963, and again in 1975, when the proliferation of small storefront theatres exhibiting "sex" films (mainly on Toronto's Yonge Street "Strip"), caused the extension of control over all methods of reproducing moving pictures for financial gain or public viewing. Essentially this was aimed at 8 mm and videotape exhibition, and has had the desired effect by further diluting the "sexploitation" films used to lure customers into these establishments.

The real problem the Board faces in the mid-1970s is the increasing reliance placed by movie-makers on explicit sex and even more explicit, and often gratuitous, violence as staple ingredients for attracting patrons. Quite clearly, hard-core, essentially pornographic films of the type found in specialty "art houses" in the United States are not allowed to be publicly exhibited in the province; exhibitions falling under the obscenity sections of the Criminal Code of Canada. If films of this type are submitted to the Board, they are usually subjected to severe cutting, which, if their narrative continuity is of the usual skimpy quality, leaves very little left for the exhibitor but the provocative title; surprisingly, in most cases this is usually sufficient to attract the required audience. It is interesting to note that despite the wide availability of hard-core product from the United States and elsewhere, in the year ending March 31, 1975, only eight films (out of 930 submissions) were not approved for exhibition. (Two of these were 16 mm prints.) Of the 824 feature films (35 mm) submitted, 165 were classified as "general exhibition"; 321 as "Adult Entertainment"; and 332 as "Restricted." In all there were 134 requests for eliminations.

Reflecting the ethnic diversity in Ontario, the Board examined films from 26 countries. The United States, quite obviously, had the largest entry with 290, but Chinese films (mainly from Hong Kong and Taiwan) accounted for 173 submissions. These were followed by Italy with 98, Great Britain with 58, Greece with 54, Germany with 40, France with 28, and Canada with 21. Interestingly, of the 21 Canadian films examined in 1974-75, 3 were approved for general exhibition; 8 for

Adult Entertainment; and 10 released as Restricted. One problem is that each of these films must be examined within their own cultural context – how much violence should be allowed in a Chinese martial arts movie that might be shown only in Toronto, or how much sex in a major Hollywood production that will be seen widely across the province? This has always been a major problem for censors – how can one centrally located decision-making body take into account such a wide diversity of norms and values as is found in Ontario?

## Endnotes

### Chapter One

- 1 "Corantos" was the name for sixteenth-century newspapers of either a single sheet or small quarto pamphlets.
- 2 Gershon Legman, *Love and Death* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1963), pp. 9, 12, 24, 94.
- 3 Morris Ernst and William Seagle, *To the Pure . . . A Study of Obscenity and the Censor* (New York: The Viking Press, 1928), p. 285.
- 4 Donald Thomas, *A Long Time Burning: The History of Literary Censorship in England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 5.
- 5 William Wilberforce, founder of the Proclamation Society in 1787, referred to voluntary societies as "guardians of the public religion and morals".
- 6 Legman, p. 19.
- 7 P. M. Pickard, *I Could a Tale Unfold: of Violence, Horror and Sensationalism in Stories for Children* (London: Tavistock, 1959), pp. 158-159.
- 8 Ibid., p. 162.
- 9 Ibid., p. 158.
- 10 Ibid., pp. 160-161.
- 11 Ibid., p. 161.
- 12 Leslie Shepard, *The History of Street Literature* (Newton Abbot: David Charles, 1973), pp. 16-17.
- 13 Thomas, p. 9.
- 14 Shepard, pp. 45, 54.
- 15 Laurence Hanson, "English Newsbooks, 1620-1644," *The Library*, Fourth Series, Vol. 18 (1958), p. 355.
- 16 Frederick Seaton Siebert, *Freedom of the Press in England 1476-1776: The Rise and Decline of Government Control* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1965), p. 154.
- 17 Marjorie Plant, *The English Book Trade: An Economic History of the Making and Sales of Books* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1965), p. 48.
- 18 M. A. Shaaber, "The History of the First English Newspaper," *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 29 (1932), pp. 551-587.
- 19 Plant, p. 238.
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- 23 Plant, p. 48.
- 24 Handover, p. 108.
- 25 Hyder E. Rollins (ed.), *Cavalier and Puritan* (New York: New York University Press, 1923), p. 43.
- 26 Milton wrote his *Areopagitica* in 1644 which attacked the whole system of licensing and urged Parliament to reverse its decisions embodied in the Act of 1643 which provided for twenty-seven schoolmasters, ministers of religion, doctors, and others to act as licensers of the press. *Areopagitica*, p. 6.
- 27 Thomas, p. 13.

- 28 C. H. Conly, *The First English Translations of the Classics* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1967).

- 29 Samuel R. Gardiner (ed.), *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), p. 137.

- 30 Ibid., p. 139.

- 31 Rollins, pp. 18-19.

- 32 Thomas, p. 31.

- 33 Plant, pp. 36-39.

### Chapter Two

- 1 Donald Thomas, *A Long Time Burning* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 152.

- 2 Ibid., pp. 171-172.

- 3 Ibid.

- 4 Ibid., p. 81.

- 5 Ibid., p. 113.

- 6 Ibid., p. 114.

- 7 J. T. Taylor, *Early Opposition to the English Novel* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1943), pp. 4-5.

- 8 Ibid., p. 1.

- 9 Ibid.

- 10 Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p. 39.

- 11 Taylor, pp. 5-9.

- 12 Watt, p. 54.

- 13 Ibid., p. 42.

- 14 Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press* (Oxford: University Press, 1939), pp. 41-42.

- 15 Taylor, p. 38.

- 16 Ibid., p. 49. There was, in fact, no Act of Parliament passed to this end.

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- 20 Blakey, p. 58.

- 21 Ibid., p. 69.

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- 23 Ibid.

- 24 W. W. Watt, *Shilling Shockers of the Gothic School* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967).

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- 29 Ibid., pp. 46, 105.

- 30 Ibid., p. 160.

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32 Webb, p. 45.

33 Taylor, p. 101.

34 Ian Watt, p. 128.

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38 Ibid., p. 65.

39 Ian Watt, p. 42

40 Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 46.

41 Thomas, pp. 117-120.

### Chapter Three

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5 Ibid., p. 14.

6 Hollingsworth, p. 10.

7 R. Altick, *Victorian Studies in Scarlet* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1970), p. 280.

8 Donald Thomas, *A Long Time Burning* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1969), pp. 225-226.

9 Ibid., p. 215.

10 Ibid., p. 262.

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36 Ibid.

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41 Ibid., p. 672.

42 Ibid., pp. 707, 742.

43 Ibid., p. 623.

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45 Ibid., p. 624.

46 Ibid., p. 761.

47 Ibid., pp. 761-762.

48 Ibid., pp. 724. For example, in 1931 the Supreme Court ruled the Minnesota "Gag Law" unconstitutional. This law allowed state officials to suppress "malicious, scandalous, and defamatory" publications as public nuisances. Chief Justice Hughes stated that the United States libel laws were adequate for redressing press abuses. This is the same as the ruling of the Canadian Supreme Court decision on Aberhart's "Gag Law" in 1936. (See page 134).

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71 Ibid., p. 161.

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73 Ibid., p. 272.

74 Ibid., p. 302.

75 Ibid., p. 306.

76 Ibid., p. 223.

77 See S. J. Woolf, "A Writer of Thrillers Talks of Crime," *The New York Times*, Nov. 10, 1929; Margery Allingham, "Mysterious Fun for Millions of Innocent Escapists," *The New York Times*, June 4, 1950; "Ian Fleming Created James Bond," *The New York Times*, Aug. 13, 1964; Ellery Queen (pseud.), "Bars Real Murder in Murder Stories," *The New York Times*, Jan. 16, 1933, all as reproduced in David Manning White, *Popular Culture* (New York: 1975).

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80 President Kennedy was a professed fan of Ian Fleming's James Bond novels and Prince Philip in Britain admitted one of his favourites was detective fiction. See "Ian Fleming Created James Bond."

81 Queen, as reproduced in David Manning White, *Popular Culture*, p. 29.

82 Mary Noel, *Villains Galore, The Heyday of the Popular Story Weekly* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1954), p. 28.

83 Ibid., p. 19.

84 Ibid., p. 32-39.

85 Ibid., p. 45.

86 Ibid., p. 102.

87 Tony Goldstone, *The Pulps, Fifty Years of American Popular Culture* (New York: Chelsea House, 1970).

88 Noel, p. 243.

89 Noel, pp. 157-158.

90 Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines 1885-1905*, Vol. 4 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 112-119. The dime novel was called "degeneracy itself."

91 Noel, pp. 300-302.

92 Legman, pp. 18-19. Legman notes that the section of the New York Penal Law which had once outlawed the "publication of pictures or stories of deeds of bloodshed, lust or crime" was negated by the Supreme Court in 1948. See the following section, *Comstockery in America*.

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95 Anthony Comstock, *Frauds Exposed* (Montclair, New Jersey: Peterson Smith, 1969), chapters 23-30.

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97 Comstock, p. 437.

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100 Morris Ernst and William Seagle, *To The Pure . . . A Study of Obscenity and the Censor* (New York: The Viking Press, 1928), *passim*.

101 Ibid., pp. 297-302.

Canadian journalism (1807-1857), illustrating the growing independence of the Canadian press.

7 Gundy, pp. 15-16.

8 Ibid., p. 30.

9 Ibid., p. 19.

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11 Bassam, p. 9.

12 Gundy, p. 31.

13 The Canadian Press Association, *A History of Canadian Journalism 1859-1908* (Toronto: Canadian Press Association, 1908), p. 164.

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15 Ibid., pp. 11-23.

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17 The Canadian Press Association, p. 176.

18 Arthur H. U. Colquhon, "A Century of Canadian Magazines," *Canadian Magazine*, Vol. 17 (1901), pp. 141-149.

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20 Ibid., p. 439.

21 Kesterton, p. 48.

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25 W. A. Craick, *A History of Canadian Journalism II, The Last Years of the Canadian Press Association 1908-1919 With a Continuing Record of the Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers' Association 1919-1959* (Toronto: Ontario Publishing Co., 1959), p. 56.

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29 Craick, p. 38.

30 Ibid., p. 58.

31 Robert Fulford, "The Press in the Community," in D. L. B. Hamlin (ed.), *The Press and the Public*, The Canadian Institute on Public Affairs Eighth Winter Conference (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), pp. 23-34.

32 Hamlin, p. 3.

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36 Ibid., p. 199.

37 Ibid., p. 202.

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39 Ibid., p. 18.

40 M. E. Nichols, *The Story of the Canadian Press* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1948), p. 221.

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2 W. H. Kesterton, *A History of Journalism in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), see note above.

3 Bertha Bassam, *The First Printers and Newspapers in Canada*, University of Toronto School of Library Science Monograph Series in Librarianship, No. 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), p. 3.

4 Ibid., p. 6.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p. 5; Kesterton, p. 12. Kesterton considers Howe's victory in the courts as the prototype of the second period of

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid., p. 243.

46 Nichols, p. 250.

47 Ibid., p. 256.

48 In 1919 The Canadian Press Association split up into more specialized groups according to type of publication and specialized function within the industry. The Canadian Daily Newspaper Publishers' Association was one group emerging from the split but retained most of the basic functions of the original CPA within the sphere of the daily newspaper industry.

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9 Ibid., p. 29.

10 Harlow, pp. 468-9.

11 Ibid., p. 470.

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13 Barnouw, pp. 32-33.

14 4-5 E. VII., C. 49. An Act to provide for the regulation of wireless telegraphy in Canada.

15 Or a reflection of totalitarian public manipulation, depending upon one's consciousness.

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18 Memorandum to Edward J. Nally, Vice-President and General Manager, Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of America, September 30, 1915. (Reproduced in *Looking Ahead, the papers of David Sarnoff* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968), pp. 31-33.

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20 Robert Edward Davis, "Response to Innovation: a study of popular argument about new mass media," Ph.D. dissertation (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa, 1965), pp. 28-30.

21 Barnouw, p. 79; Paul Schubert, *The Electric Word* (New York: Arno Press, 1971 [1928]), p. 238.

22 Llewellyn White, *The American Radio* (New York: Arno Press, 1971 [1947]), pp. 27-28.

23 Ibid., p. 29. Whether AT&T performed a public service by instituting commercial sponsorship has yet to be decided.

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27 Ibid., pp. 157-8.

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30 Caldwell, p. 471.

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41 Stockton Helffrich, "The radio and television codes and the public interest," *Journal of Broadcasting*, Vol. XIV, No. 3, Summer 1970, p. 267.

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52 Ibid., pp. 212-275.

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148 Graham Spry, "Radio broadcasting and aspects of Canadian-American relations," in W. W. McLaren et al., *Conference on Canadian-American Affairs, Proceedings*, (New York: Ginn and Company, 1936), p. 106.

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163 Ibid., pp. 240-5.

164 Frankel, p. 481.

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166 Paul Lazarsfeld, *What We Really Know About Daytime Serials* (New York: Columbia Broadcasting System, 1942).

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and the Mass Media (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 181.

2 Hayden Weller, "The First Comic Book," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 18, No. 4, Dec. 1944, p. 195. The first comic book was a collection of "Mutt and Jeff" strips and appeared in 1911.

3 P.M. Pickard, *I Could A Tale Unfold: Violence, Horror and Sensationalism in Stories for Children* (London: Tavistock, 1959), pp. 101, 107.

4 James Steranko, *The Steranko History of the Comics* (Wyomissing, Penn.: Supergraphics, 1972), p. 5.

5 Bruce D. Hutchison, "Comic Strip Violence, 1911-1966," *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 2, Summer 1969, pp. 358-364.

6 Bill Stephenson, "Remember When the Comics were Funny?" *Maclean's*, Vol. 69, Dec. 22, 1956, p. 11.

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8 Ibid., p. 266.

9 Aaron Berkman, "Sociology of the Comic Strip," *American Spectator*, Vol. 4, June 1936, pp. 52-53.

10 Stephenson, p. 44.

11 Les Daniels, *Comix: A History of Comic Books in America* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1971), p. 6.

12 George Perry and Alan Aldridge, *The Penguin Book of Comics* (Penguin, 1971), p. 107.

13 Gilbert Seldes, *The Seven Lively Arts* (New York: Sagamore Press, 1924), p. 200.

14 Perry and Aldridge, p. 16.

15 Hutchinson, p. 363.

16 Perry and Aldridge, p. 170.

17 Coulton Waugh, *The Comics* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), p. 344.

18 Ibid., p. 343.

19 Ibid., p. 344.

20 Daniels, p. ix.

21 Ibid., p. 53.

22 Larsen, pp. 214-226. Larsen has reprinted excerpts from William Gaines's testimony before the Kefauver Senate committee which reveal that, although many of his comic books were of this wholesome nature, he was also a prime offender. Gaines originated the "horror" comic book and issued many more of these at a dime than his Picture Stories series which sold at 65¢ per issue.

23 It is surprising that Lord Northcliffe, with his moral aspirations in the field of children's literature, was also the founder of the *London Daily Mirror*, one of the most sensational and controversial British tabloids.

24 Perry and Aldridge, p. 47.

25 Pickard, pp. 98-101.

26 Michael Hirsh and Patrick Laubert, *The Great Canadian Comic Books* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Ltd., 1971), p. 15.

27 Ibid.

## Chapter Seven

1 John E. Twomey, "New Forms of Social Control over Mass Media Content," pp. 174-182 in Otto N. Larsen (ed.), *Violence*

28 Marilyn Graafls, "Violence in Comic Books," in Larsen, pp. 93-96.

29 Harvey Zorbaugh, "The Comics, where they stand," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 18, No. 4, Dec. 1944, pp. 196-203.

In 1933, the estimated reading public according to Market Research Co. of America was 70,000,000. The breakdown by sex and by age is as follows: *Males*: Of males 6-11 yrs, 95 per cent; 12-17 yrs, 87 per cent; 18-30 yrs, 41 per cent; over 31 yrs, 16 per cent; *Females*: Of females 6-11 yrs, 91 per cent; 12-17 yrs, 81 per cent; 18-30 yrs, 28 per cent; and over 31 yrs, 10 per cent, read comic books regularly. To be classified a regular reader for children means 12-13 comic books read per month and for adults, 6-8 comic books per month. Comic Books outsell the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Reader's Digest* combined, at a ratio of 10:1 (p. 197-198).

30 Sterling North, "Editorial," *Chicago Daily News*, May 8, 1949, p. 21, col. 4.

31 Fredric Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent* (New York: Rinehart, 1953), pp. 10, 243, 164, 118.

32 Wertham said that the average child spent two to three hours each day reading comic books, a statement he was unable to substantiate.

33 Wertham, p. 118.

34 Ibid., p. 328.

35 Twomey, p. 175.

36 Ibid.

37 Gershon Legman, *Love and Death* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1964), p. 34.

38 Ibid., p. 33.

39 Twomey, p. 181.

40 Sidney Katz, "What about the Comics: Are they the Road to Delinquency or Finding a 'Harmless Outlet?'" *Maclean's*, Vol. 61, p. 71.

41 Gweneira Williams and Jane Wilson, "They Like it Rough," *Library Journal*, March 1, 1942, p. 206.

42 Josette Frank, "What's in the Comics?" *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Dec. 1944, p. 217.

43 Katherine M. Fiske and Marjorie Fiske, "The Children Talk About Comics," Norman G. Tubergen and Karen E. Freidland, "Preference Patterns for Comic Strips among Teenagers," *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 4, Winter, 1972, pp. 745-50. The authors have noted a similar developmental pattern in the use of comic strips.

44 Lauretta Bender, "The Psychology of Children's Reading and the Comics," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 18, No. 4, Dec. 1944, p. 227.

45 Josette Frank, "Chills and Thrills in Radio, Movies and Comics," *Child Study*, Vol. 25, Spring, 1948, p. 44. In contradiction to this assertion, J. Homer et al. in the *Second Report on the Adoption of Television by Native Communities in the Canadian North*, pp. 68-69 states:

The Cree people are critical of sex and violence on television. They blame television for a too early awareness of sex on the part of the child and a too early experimentation with it. They also blame television for dangerous children's games including kung-fu fighting and sword fighting and for the occasional discovery of children tied up to trees and abandoned.

46 Ibid., p. 48.

47 Sidonie M. Gruenberg, "New Voices Speak to our Children," *Parents' Magazine*, Vol. 16, June, 1941, p. 23.

48 Frank, "Chills and Thrills . . .," p. 44.

49 Lauretta Bender and Reginald M. Laurie, "The Effect of Comic Books on the Ideology of Children," the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, Vol. 2, July, 1941, pp. 540-550.

50 Paul S. Deland, "Battling Crime Comics to Protect Youth," *Federal Probation*, Vol. 19, 1905, pp. 26-30.

51 Lovell Thompson, "How Serious are the Comics?" *Atlantic Monthly*, September, 1942, Vol. 170, p. 129.

52 William T. Noble, "Superman and the Censors," *Sunday Magazine*, Feb. 22, 1976, pp. 17, 33.

53 New Zealand Libraries, "Concern over Comics," *Ontario Library Review*, Vol. 30, May 1946, p. 162.

54 Wertham questions the validity of the statements of psychiatrists cited who defend the comics as having positive value when he reveals that the most prominent are actually on the payrolls of the largest comic book publishers (p. 223).

55 Harold C. Gardiner, *The Catholic Viewpoint on Censorship* (New York: Hanover House, 1958), p. 109.

56 Ibid., p. 110.

57 Twomey, p. 178.

58 Dr. Jesse L. Murrel, "Annual Rating of Comic Magazines," *Parents' Magazine*, Vol. 25, Oct. 1950, pp. 44-45, Vol. 27, Nov. 1952, pp. 48-49, Vol. 28, Oct. 1953, pp. 54-55, Vol. 29, Aug. 1954, pp. 48-49, Vol. 30, Aug. 1955, pp. 48-50, Vol. 31, July 1956, pp. 48-49.

59 Dr. Jesse L. Murrel, "The Greater Cincinnati Committee on the Evaluation of Comic Books," in Larsen, p. 188.

60 "Looking at the Comics 1949," *Child Study*, Fall 1949, Vol. 26, pp. 110-112, 124.

61 Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1964), p. 360.

62 Murrel, "Cincinnati Committee . . .," p. 184.

63 "Fighting Gunfire with Fire," *Newsweek*, Dec. 20, 1948, pp. 54, 56-57.

64 Peterson, p. 359.

65 Walter B.J. Mitchell, Jr., "Dell Needs no Watchdog," *America*, Dec. 11, 1954, p. 308.

66 John E. Twomey, *The Anti-Comic Book Crusade*, Master's thesis (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1955), p. 19.

67 Ibid., pp. 20-21.

68 Ibid., p. 22.

69 Charles F. Murphy, "A Seal of Approval for the Comic Books," *Federal Probation*, Vol. 19, 1956, pp. 19-20.

70 Fredric Wertham, "It's Still Murder," *Saturday Review of Literature*, April 9, 1955.

71 Daniels, p. 89.

72 Twomey, *The Anti-Comic Book Crusade*, p. 18.

73 Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent*, pp. 229-330.

74 See Katz, pp. 7, 71-75, "The Wanser Comics," *Maclean's*, Vol. 62, Mar. 8, 1947, p. 5 and "Crime Death Knell," *Saturday Night*, Vol. 65, Nov. 22, 1949, p. 28.

75 "Canada Comics Ban," *Newsweek*, Nov. 11, 1949, p. 62.

76 Twomey, *The Anti-Comic Book Crusade*, p. 10.  
 Psychiatrist Fredric Wertham gave a testimony to the Canadian parliament which greatly influenced the final decision.

77 Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent*, p. 282.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 281.

79 "More Junk," *Saturday Night*, Vol. 65, Dec. 27, 1949, p. 37.  
 The original draft of the bill contained a loophole. A dealer had to "knowingly" sell a comic book which "exclusively or substantially" comprised matter pictorially showing the commission of crimes, "real or fictitious." Under the revised legislation, ignorance was no excuse.  
 A further amendment was made on April 1, 1955, which forbids the sale, distribution, publishing of crime comics defined as any book, serial, etc. filled wholly or substantially with pictures of actual crimes or events connected with crimes whether events occurred before or after, real or fictitious.

80 Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent*, p. 283.

81 "More Junk," p. 87.

82 Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent*, p. 283.

83 *Financial Post*, Vol. 45, July 1951, pp. 1, 3. The dealers were in a bind owing to the common practice of "block-booking" by which they were forced to accept crime comics to get other more respectable magazines.

84 *Ibid.*

85 Cicely Sampson, "Abolishing Crime Comics," *Food for Thought*, Vol. 18, Nov. 1957, pp. 74-81.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 85.

87 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

88 *Financial Post*, V-1. 45, p. 8, 1951.

89 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

90 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

91 Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent*, p. 287.

92 *Ibid.*, p. 289.

93 *Ibid.*

94 Pickard, p. 97.

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97 *Ibid.*, pp. 361, 369.

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**Chapter Eight**

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Speaking the Unspeakable:

# Violence in the Literature of Our Time

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There seems to be little argument over the fact that violence plays a major part in the public storytelling – movies, television, books, plays – of this historic period. The following notes attempt to explore some of the sources of that pre-occupation with violence, and some of the explanations given for it. But before discussing that, I want to describe the community to which that fictional violence is offered, the community that pays money for it, accepts it, and apparently enjoys it. And here I proceed without documentation or footnotes, intuition being my only guide. My experience, as writer, husband, father, citizen, teaches me that I live in a community – I'm speaking here of North America and the democracies of Western Europe – which is dominated by envy. Most of the people around me, no matter how successful they may be, no matter how much they may have exceeded the original goals of their adult life, are profoundly envious of one another. This envy is without question a part of the human condition but in my view it is heavily reinforced, and distorted out of all proportion, by the mass media and the messages they deliver to us. We – the last few generations or so, but especially the generation that came to maturity in the television age – have to contend with something none of our ancestors faced: we feel compelled to watch, every day of our lives, an unending spectacle of riches displayed before us on the screens in our living rooms and [to a lesser extent] in our cinemas. The pictures on these screens describe to us a life that in many ways seems superior to the one we lead. That pictured life is glamorous, exciting, sexually fulfilling, lacking in drudgery or boredom. It is lived by persons who are more handsome than we are, and apparently more satisfied with their work and their private lives. Most of these persons – whether they are in spy stories or situation comedies or sports programs – seem to move effortlessly from one absorbing event to another. Naturally, they arouse our envy. At the same time, while these programs seem to stimulate our envy *accidentally*, the commercials which interrupt them do so *on purpose*. The commercials describe to us a life that is better than the one we live – full of comradeship, love, glamour. This is the life we can have, the commercials imply, if only we purchase the products named. We know that is a lie, yet we are unable to restrain the feeling that somehow we have been cheated of something. The effect of television, I am trying to say, is to make us unhappy with what we have or may ever hope to have – and I believe this is a more important effect of television than the violence it may or may not cause.

The result of this much envy can only be a permanent, barely suppressed (and not always suppressed) rage. We grow angry at what we lack; and, as the years of television-watching constantly remind us of the inadequacy of our lives, we grow angrier still. But television and movies offer us an antidote. They sell us a cure for the disease they have helped produce: violence.

They offer us a temporary release in the form of horrendously violent movies and programs that release – for only a moment, of course – our worst angers. As I've said elsewhere, this is a solution, of sorts, in the sense that heroin is a solution to an unhappy family life.

But where does the violence that the media provide come from? It can be traced at least partly to serious literature – the serious international fiction that is admiringly reviewed in the newspapers, studied in our universities, analyzed in the quarterly literary journals. This literature is not usually Canadian in origin – the theme of mindless violence that appears so often in international literature turns up only occasionally in Canadian fiction, and in any case Canadian fiction matters only slightly to the media climate we live in. It is not Canadian literature that shapes the minds of the men and women [mostly in Los Angeles and New York] who in turn shape our mass media.

Those who do not ordinarily read serious fiction may be surprised at the violence it contains. It is a commonplace of media criticism to note that the *popular* arts increasingly emphasize violence and it is assumed that in this emphasis there is far more than a hint of commercial motive: "violence sells". What is not noticed nearly so often is that the serious novel, one of the least commercial of art forms, has also shown – over, say, the last 30 years – an increasing preoccupation with violence. Here the motive is seldom, if ever, purely commercial because the art form itself is only marginally commercial. Most serious novels do not sell more than a few thousand copies when they first appear. Authors and publishers do not produce them for commercial motives because, more often than not, the writing and publishing of such books is a way of losing rather than making money. What they are trying to do, out of an unknowable mixture of pure and impure motives, is to tell the truth. The 1976 Nobel laureate, Saul Bellow – in whose novels violence appears briefly but crucially, like a series of lightning flashes – recently said:

When it is going well a novel affords the highest kind of truth; a good writer can lay claim to a disinterestedness that is as great as that of a pure scientist . . . In its complicated, possibly even mysterious, way, the novel is an instrument for delving into human truths . . . As a novelist, it is a good part of my job to attempt to formulate, as dramatically and as precisely as I can, the pain and anguish that we all feel.<sup>1</sup>

Pain and anguish, endured without the ultimate consolation of religion, have been at the core of the modern experience, and it has been the novelist's function (among many other functions) to bring our particular contemporary pain and particular contemporary anguish within the realm of literature. In doing this, the novelists cannot help us to eliminate the pain and anguish; but they can show us ways to think about them and experience them emotionally.

The developments in government and technology peculiar to the twentieth century, working on us both

consciously and unconsciously, have transformed the western world's view of mankind, and at the same time have radically altered the serious literature of the western world. Under the pressure of public events, the central movement of thought in our time – thought in this case as reflected by recent fiction – has been away from the liberal humanism of the pre-1914 period and toward a pessimistic view of mankind's possibilities and prospects, a view that increasingly expresses itself through the imagining and depiction of violent acts as central symbols of mankind's nature. The American poet Stanley Kunitz has tried to sum up what this has meant to writers:

We live in one of the most violent epochs of history, in which none of us can claim ignorance of the many faces of disorder. A man of this century has witnessed great seismic shifts of power; the rise and fall of dictators; the convulsions of nations; the slaughter of innocents; unprecedented scandals in high places, brutalities, terrors. 'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold,' Yeats wrote.<sup>2</sup>

The present essay attempts to indicate how our changing perceptions of violence are demonstrated in the work of a few distinguished novelists of recent decades. It tries to suggest ways in which these works – selected from among hundreds of examples that might be used – mirror modern history, both as that history has actually happened and as it has been (partially) assimilated into the collective mind of western humanity. It considers the possibility that violence in all forms of art, while at times reflecting commercial pressures, is nevertheless also an unavoidable part of our most serious as well as our most frivolous culture. And it tries to indicate how the use of violence in "high culture" (in this case serious fiction) may influence the content of "mass culture" i.e. movies and television.

The ideas contained here are necessarily personal. They are not based on a measured sociological survey; they do not pretend to scientific precision. They emerge from a lifetime of reading and a quarter of a century spent in analyzing the results of that reading in terms of its sources and its results.

My argument begins where the imaginative life of our time really begins – in the German death camps as the soldiers from North America and England discovered them in 1944 and 1945, and under the blinding atomic sun of Hiroshima in the summer of 1945.

These events were so traumatic, so powerful in their effect on the collective western soul, that to this day – more than three decades later – we have only begun to sense completely their meaning. Their importance is all the greater for the fact that we try to ignore them. At certain times, and in certain circumstances, we speak of them; but for the most part, we try to let them rest. Yet they sit deep in our subconscious, their effects spreading out in waves to influence, not only what we say, but how we think and feel about ourselves and others.

On the one hand, we learned that what had happened in Germany was far worse than we had feared or even

dreamt – some six million persons, little children as well as men and women, had been gassed or otherwise destroyed after being pitilessly degraded. This was the worst crime of all the centuries, and it had been accomplished in our time by persons not vastly different from us. We were all implicated because it was not done by a small group of men – a whole continent had conspired with Hitler to kill the Jews, and it was the same continent from which our culture sprang. The Holocaust is a fact of history from which we still shield ourselves, which we still have not altogether understood.

On the other hand, we learned in roughly the same period of the existence of a military weapon so terrible it could destroy us all – and it had already been used (some said unnecessarily) to destroy a city. Ever since, psychologists and psychiatrists have tried to consider the effect of those events on all of us. The psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton has spoken of the "psychic numbing" that Hiroshima and Nagasaki produced:

Concerning the atomic bomb, for instance, one could find evidence of psychic numbing in the scientists who created it and the way in which they looked upon what they were doing; in the behavior of the political leaders who made the decision to drop it, or at least failed to decide not to drop it; and in the pilots and crewmen who carried it to, and released it over, its target. When I say this, I am not name-calling, but attempting to illustrate a general phenomenon. In any case, I would stress the widespread indeed *universal* [italics added] nuclear numbing affecting us today.<sup>3</sup>

Since 1945 we have lived simultaneously with the knowledge of how badly humans can act when given total power over others and the knowledge that total human extinction is possibly our immediate fate. These two central facts, each of them surrounded by endless documentation and argument, became the major shaping data of our historic period – they are responsible, more than anything else, for the intellectual and moral climate in which we live. Through them our thoughts were driven to extremes – what one American poet called "the age of enormity" had become "the age of extremity". The death camps gave us one idea of human extremity, the nuclear bombs gave us another. For all the years since then we have lived in the shadow of these two events. They effectively destroyed our optimism, and our central belief in the inevitable progress of mankind; they gave us a new conception of evil and its permanent place in the world. They brought us to a dark recognition of the fact that evil will not be banished, will not be redeemed. As Jean-Paul Sartre says:

We have been taught to take Evil seriously. It is neither our fault nor our merit if we lived in a time when torture was a daily fact . . . Dachau and Auschwitz have all demonstrated to us that Evil is not an appearance, that knowing its causes does not dispel it, that it is not opposed to Good as a confused idea is to a clear one . . . In spite of ourselves, we come to this conclusion, which will seem shocking to lofty souls: Evil cannot be redeemed.<sup>4</sup>

Many of our most serious books, and many of our most frivolous, reflect the data that Sartre stresses. It could be argued, of course, that books, particularly serious books, matter only a little in forming popular consciousness – that same popular consciousness which is a part of the subject of this Royal Commission. The argument could be made that television and, to a lesser extent, movies, have pushed books out of the arena in which mass taste is created; and that therefore the tendencies demonstrated by writers like Norman Mailer or William Burroughs are only distantly relevant to this inquiry.

Against that there are two important points to be made: (1) Novels sell better now, in paperback, than they have ever sold before – and most of the novels mentioned in this study have been distributed in the millions as mass market paperbacks. (2) Despite the obvious commercial predominance of television and movies, the North American culture in which we live is still based on the written word. “Literature”, defined very broadly, is the bedrock on which mass culture rests.

The second of these points needs some explanation. Every television show or movie, before it becomes a series of images, must be a series of written words, produced by someone who calls himself or herself a writer. This writer, however distantly, is part of the literary world and is influenced by the course of literature.

In the most spectacularly successful cases, the relationship between “literature” and mass visual culture is close and direct: the words are published and distributed first, as books. The most popular movies (*The Godfather* or *Jaws*) come from books, and so in many cases do the most successful television shows (*Roots* or *Rich Man, Poor Man*).

Beyond that, books remain the most important single means for developing, promulgating and exchanging ideas among the educated élite who create the mass media. When an idea appears on television, it is more often than not an idea that has first been developed in book form.

In this process, “serious” literature has a way of making legitimate – at least in the eyes of the creators – certain ideas and images that might otherwise be considered outrageous. The academic critic John Fraser, after surveying various kinds of violence in literature, writes:

... it is a great merit of some of the violences that I have been talking about in these pages that they make it harder to ignore certain facts, such as the intensity with which some convictions are held, and the implacability with which some people act on their beliefs, and the fact that in some conflicts both parties cannot be winners and that beyond a certain point one has to choose between them if one wishes to retain one's intellectual self-respect.<sup>5</sup>

Fraser is saying, in other words, that violence is an essential part of the *seriousness* of the works he

discusses; without that violence they have less purpose and would accomplish less of what they set out to do. But this same kind of academic argument is frequently moved over into mass culture – as, for instance, in many arguments given by the film director Sam Peckinpah, whose movies (beginning with *The Wild Bunch* in 1969) have led the way toward more and more explicit violence in the movies and, indirectly, on television. The argument set forth by Peckinpah and his admirers is that only if we see something that looks like *real* violence on the screen (blood spurting from men's heads, for instance) can we understand the nature of violence. The “mild” violence favored by earlier film directors is thus seen as an evasion, a form of dishonesty. The thinking behind this owes a great deal to what we call high culture: it is one of the many illustrations of an academic/ intellectual idea put to use in the commercial marketplace.

Violent images and ideas (like ideas of many other kinds) tend to move downward in our culture. What is used in a highbrow novel in one decade may be used in a lowbrow novel in the next. Scenes of homosexual rape, explicitly described, appear in the 1960s in novels like those of Hubert Selby Jr.; by 1975 homosexual rape in a prison has turned up in Arthur Hailey's *The Moneychangers*, a frankly commercial, popular novel; and a year or so after that it appears on network television in the television adaptation of the Hailey material.

Sometimes the movement from high culture to serious culture is even more direct. Violence in a novel may be given a context that provides its meaning, but that meaning may be lost when the material of the novel is used elsewhere. Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, when it first appeared, was praised as a remarkably original novel: its brilliant language and its solemn discussion of the morality of behaviour therapy were judged important. It was, beyond question, a “serious” work. But when the same material was made into a film by Stanley Kubrick, the literary quality vanished and the moral point was muddled; but the violent actions were retained and reinforced.

The interchange between highbrow and popular culture is, however, more complicated than a simple and inexorable downward motion. Ideas move in the opposite direction as well – the effects of popular culture can often be traced in serious literature, particularly since the 1960s. The writings of William Burroughs, for instance, are deeply affected by private-eye melodramas and comic-book fantasies. Popular culture is part of the environment in which the writer forms his own character and taste. A novelist who in adolescence sees movies like Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs* may decide that Peckinpah-like violence is acceptable in his own work when he becomes a professional writer.

For all of these reasons we can only begin to understand violence in mass culture if we understand how it works in serious literature. In this context the novels of

Jerzy Kosinski provide a set of examples. Kosinski works from within the world of Evil which Sartre described, the world in which Evil cannot be redeemed but must be acknowledged and confronted. His characters – victims of Nazi oppression and ordinary citizens of the world alike – have abandoned morality. Like the rest of us, they live in a world driven to extremes of immorality. But unlike most of us, they allow these extremes to pervade their personalities and find expression in their actions. In this they are typical figures of modern fiction. Others like them have appeared in earlier writing – in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's fiction, for example – but in the past they tended to be rare exceptions and were studied carefully on just those grounds. Now they have ceased to be exceptions. They are the kind of people the serious contemporary reader meets again and again in the books of our time. Their lives and their natures are violent because they live in a world in which – religion having largely vanished from public life – the only real force is violence.

Kosinski is a moralist who writes about immorality. His morality lies in his insistence that we face the truth about mankind. Most of us are dedicated to keeping the truth about our common humanity at a distance. When someone does something of which we vigorously disapprove, we call his or her actions "inhuman" – even though they may be actions which have been performed often by persons who are clearly members of the human race. Kosinski's books insist that it as "human" to destroy as to create. His characters, stripped of moral sense, express that side of humanity which gave us the death camps, the Soviet slave camps, the atomic bombings, and the many subsequent events to which we have now become all but inured.

Kosinski's most recent novel, *Cockpit*, concerns a kind of freelance secret agent, Tarden, who penetrates the lives of others and produces well-planned chaos. He uses kidnapping, killing, beating, and rape for his own pleasure and the advancement of his never-quite-defined plans. If other characters in the novel displease him, he plans careful and deeply painful vengeance. Towards the end of the book he has an affair with a beautiful woman and helps arrange her marriage to a rich man. She becomes famous and powerful, and then refuses to continue seeing Tarden. He plans his revenge carefully. He kidnaps her and takes her to his apartment. He confronts her: "Was she stupid enough to believe that I would let her forget her personal debt to me or that she could abort our relationship when it pleased her to do so?" He goes out and returns with three derelict middle-aged men, whom he pays to degrade her:

They threw her down on the carpet. All three of them swarmed all over her, licking and squeezing. I climbed on the desk and took pictures from above. The spotlights shone on her hair, on the embroidery of her dress, on the derelicts' gaunt bodies. The men's arms moved over her like skeletons' limbs, peeling off her clothes until she was naked and spread-eagled on her back,

her arms flailing at the three scrofulous heads that eagerly bent over her.

After she has been raped many times and otherwise degraded, she leaves his apartment. But again she refuses to see him. Now he determines to destroy her. He blackmails her into seeing him once more. They are to go to an air show together. He has prepared an especially hideous death. He goes to see a test pilot who will be showing aircraft at the show. He explains that he wants to put a woman in front of the aircraft's radar system and then turn on the system. The pilot says:

'I can't do that. If the radar functions while the plane is on the ground, there's a serious radiation hazard. Do you know what radar radiation would do to her?'

'I do.'

'It would kill her.'

The pilot says that would be a hell of a way to kill a person.

'If you refuse me,' I said, 'I'll have someone wrap a heavy towel around her head to muffle her screams, and club her repeatedly with an iron bar until her blood soaks through the towel, and her skull, jaw and spine are smashed. Is that more merciful?'

The pilot refuses, but Tarden continues his argument:

You found reasons to machine-gun, bomb and napalm thousands of perfect strangers (in Vietnam). All I want you to do is switch on the radar. Instead of a village, its screen will show a single, human-shaped target. After a moment too brief for proper identification of the object, you will simply switch the radar off. Your mission will be over and for it I'll pay you as much cash as you were paid for all your combat missions put together. How's that for a logic tree? Can you override that?'

The pilot agrees, the radar is switched on, and we are left to assume that the woman dies horribly of cancer in the months that follow.

There is a kind of addled morality to the character Tarden. After all, the woman has "betrayed" him, and at one point we are told she may be plotting her husband's murder; therefore she is punished. But if this is morality, it is a kind of imaginative version of the law of the jungle, because it is a morality stripped of restraints. Tarden has reached the point of limitless violence and exploitation of humans – just as, Kosinski would argue, the civilized world long ago reached it. Tarden argues that the pilot, after all, killed thousands of anonymous humans without a twinge of regret; his acquiescence in the radiation death of the woman is by comparison a crime of modest dimensions.

It can be objected that Kosinski, in *Cockpit* as in other books (*The Painted Bird*, *Steps*, et cetera) reaches beyond the ordinary depiction of murder or rape and moves towards the pornography of violence. His descriptions are detailed (though written in a spare and graceful style); he stresses the violence. But Kosinski could argue in reply that it is the very intimacy of his work, the very closeness of the reader's relation to both the murderer and his victim, that makes his fiction meaningful. To distance the writing would rob it of its

artistic meaning: literary art is only art if it *matters* to the reader, and Kosinski's stylistic closeness is a way of making it matter. For the writer to step back and regard his material with a cool eye would be to let the reader off too easily.

Kosinski has, in fact, argued that rejecting the "truth" of his direct, mind-assaulting passages is a kind of evasion which may be harmful to the reader – even in the most practical terms. If one flees from such knowledge, he suggests:

... you make yourself even more vulnerable. The tragedy, for instance, of East European Jewry was that when they were, well – collected – perhaps I should say, by the Germans and transported to the concentration camps, until the last second they did not believe that they would perish in the gas chamber. They heard of it, but they didn't believe it. They said, it's simply incredible. Why would a civilized nation do something of that sort? The inability to see the trauma of daily life as such breeds future victims.

I remember a woman who told me that she couldn't read the book *The Painted Bird*; she reached this particular episode and couldn't go through it. When I said why, she said, the eyes are being gouged out. And I said well, there are worse things, there were worse things, there have been worse things in our reality. Have you heard of the concentration camps? ... Certainly, this I understand very well, but gouging out someone's eyes, how can you explain something like this? And this is my point. The concentration camp as such is a symbol you can live with very well. We do . . . But when you describe the eyes being gouged out, you don't make it easier for the reader, he cannot help feeling his own eyes disappearing somehow, becoming blind.<sup>7</sup>

Kosinski sees his work, in all its violence and squalor, as a metaphor for the human condition in this period for what has happened, for what is happening, for what is likely to continue happening. In this he stands with a whole generation of novelists whose anarchic violence is a response – possibly feeble, but also based on truth – to a world dominated by anarchic violence.

Most readers, and many critics, have noticed that this post-Holocaust literature is painful. Moreover, the better the writer, the harder it is to endure the writing. Lawrence L. Langer writes:

... perhaps never before in the history of literature have authors had to fight a reader reluctance based not on an inability to understand what they are about – this has been the initial fate of *Ulysses*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *Waiting for Godot*, for example – but on the alleged assumption of the reader that he understood it only too well, that there is little need to burden the human imagination with further morbid explorations of a horrible reality which anyone with a long memory or a diligent curiosity is already acquainted with.<sup>8</sup>

The human mind, instinctively working in its own defence, rejects what it cannot bear; and the truth about recent human history is quite literally, in psychic terms, unbearable. We can handle only a little of it; some of us can handle almost none.

This is a more simple-minded version of the implicit demand for silence that the critic George Steiner sets forth – half-seriously, but at least that – in *Language of*

*Silence*. Surveying the literature of recent decades, he finds that the writers as well as the readers have turned away from the Holocaust and the events related to it. "It is as if the complication, pace, and political enormity of our age had bewildered and driven back the confident master-builder's imagination of classic literature and the nineteenth-century novel." He suggests that "We cannot pretend that Belsen is irrelevant to the responsible life of the imagination. What man has inflicted on man, in very recent times, has affected the writer's primary material – the sum and potential of human behaviour – and it presses on the brain with a new darkness." Language itself is degraded by the enormity of the age, he suggests, and possibly the only honest response is silence: "The world of Auschwitz lies outside speech as it lies outside reason."<sup>9</sup>

Elie Wiesel is one of those who chose not to be silent; in his classic *Night* he provided a widely influential account of a boy's life in a concentration camp. Wiesel's early life was spent in comparative security, in an atmosphere of predictability. Then he was taken to Auschwitz and, as he tells us, was changed forever. "The student of the Talmud, the child that I was, had been consumed in the flames. There remained only a shape that looked like me. A dark flame had entered into my soul and devoured it." He survived, and took upon himself to bear witness, and in the process produced a masterpiece of – well, of violence, among other things. At one point he tells us how three prisoners, two men and a boy, were accused of sabotage by the camp guards. They were hanged before thousands of inmates. Then the prisoners were forced to march past the dangling bodies:

The two adults were no longer alive. Their tongues hung swollen, blue-tinged. But the third rope was still moving; being so light, the child was still alive . . .

For more than half an hour he stayed there, struggling between life and death, dying in slow agony under our eyes. And we had to look him full in the face. He was still alive when I passed in front of him. His tongue was still red, his eyes were not yet glazed.

Behind me, I heard a man asking:

'Where is God now?'

And I heard a voice within me answer him:

'Where is He? Here He is – he is hanging here on this gallows . . .'

That night the soup tasted of corpses.<sup>10</sup>

The American critic Robert Alter has commented:

The novels of Elie Wiesel strike me as a singularly impressive instance of how the creative imagination can surprise our expectations of what its limits should be. It is natural enough to wonder whether it is really possible to write about the Holocaust, to use the written word, which by its very nature is committed to order, as a means of representing and assessing absolute moral chaos. With this awesome difficulty in mind, the British critic, A. Alvarez, has suggested that any adequate writing on the Holocaust must be in some way anti-realistic, fracturing reality into jumbled splinters, as in fact the Nazi

horror fractured the moral world which people used to imagine . . . The achievement, however, of Elie Wiesel's five published books reminds us of the danger in issuing prescriptions about things of the spirit. He has managed to realize the terrible past imaginatively, with growing artistic strength in a narrative form that is consecutive, coherent, and, at least on the surface, realistic . . .<sup>11</sup>

But a great many other writers have asked the question: if *this* is reality – if the Holocaust and napalm in Vietnam and forcible imprisonments in mental hospitals in Russia are reality – then what is left for fiction?

We could argue, if we still believed in the nineteenth-century master-builders of literature whom Steiner mentioned, that what is left for fiction is the systematic re-creation of an ordered world and a moral universe. For many, art has replaced religion. Why, then, cannot art provide some of the moral force of religion? But the implicit answer from some of the most distinguished writers of this period is that a disordered world can't call forth an orderly fiction – that the only honest reflection of real disorder is a fictional disorder. It may be given an aesthetic shape, but it can hardly call on a morality that the world has ceased to live by and can barely even remember. Perhaps that morality never really existed – perhaps Alter is right when, following Alvarez, he calls it "the moral world which *people used to imagine*". In any case, real or imagined, it has disappeared in the rubble of the country, leaving behind some ghostly shadows of itself and a sense of irredeemable loss.

The American novelist Jerome Charyn – who is, like all serious novelists, at heart still a moralist – describes the present world and fiction's peculiar place in it: Terror is now the norm . . . In a murderous, mechanical society, love and death have become interchangeable . . . (Literature is now necessarily) the language of hysteria . . . Whatever place the black humorists ultimately hold in our literature, they have shown us the brittleness of the human heart and have warned us of the emptiness we will have to endure in a society that has devoted itself to hate rather than to love.<sup>12</sup>

Against that view, it can be argued that at many points in history, conditions like those Charyn mentions were part of life. Terror was the norm in the French Revolution. Society was murderous in the slave camps of the nineteenth century. The industrial revolution in Britain and elsewhere must have seemed inhumanly mechanical. None of these periods gave rise to the kind of pervasively violent and sickening literature that is close to being the norm in the present period.

The difference is in scale and in perception:

(1) *Scale*: There was never anything before on the scale of the Nazi death camps; there was never anything so horrifying as atomic warfare, nothing so massive as the Soviet slave camps has ever been designed before.

(2) *Perception*: Today we are condemned to knowledge of horror. Perhaps only a few imaginative persons in England (aside from soldiers themselves) knew how terrible World War I was; but all of us, watching television, knew some of the worst details of

Vietnam. And while Charles Dickens knew there were slave camps, he never saw a film of one. The writers of today live with the monstrousness of our times engraved on their imaginations by film and still photo. Which is why a black humorist may insist, as Charyn does, that terror is the norm. In his own life, in fact, it is quite likely *not* the norm; but in his *knowledge* of contemporary life, it most certainly is.

It is this knowledge of an endless horror stretching beneath the sometimes placid surface of the modern city that informs the work of writers as different as William Burroughs and Hubert Selby Jr. Burroughs writes a jumpy, nervous kind of surrealistic prose, moving anxiously and unpredictably from scene to scene, whereas Selby works in a close-to-orthodox narrative style. But they both present the same nightmare world in which all illusions have been destroyed and all hope of authentic love has vanished.

Burroughs' characters, their minds and bodies rotted by narcotics, live in dread of a police state that is omnipresent but never quite real. They seem always to be looking over their shoulders for the spy or policeman waiting to kill them. When violence finally occurs in Burroughs, it has the pace of a slow-motion film. His most famous and most widely praised novel, *The Naked Lunch*, is an addict's nightmare of pursuit, violence, and escape. At one point the narrator is being arrested by two policemen, and fights back:

I squirted a thin jet of alcohol, whipping it across his eyes with a sideways shake of the syringe. He let out a bellow of pain. I could see him pawing at his eyes with the left hand like he was tearing off an invisible bandage as I dropped to the floor on one knee, reaching for my suitcase. I pushed the suitcase open, and my left hand closed over the gun butt – I am righthanded but I shoot with my left hand. I felt the concussion of Hauser's shot before I heard it. His slug slammed into the wall behind me. Shooting from the floor, I snapped two quick shots into Hauser's belly where his vest had pulled up showing an inch of white shirt. He grunted in a way I could feel and doubled forward. Stiff with panic, O'Brien's hand was tearing at the gun in his shoulder holster. I clamped on my other hand around my gun wrist to steady it for the long pull – this gun has the hammer filed off round so you can only use it double action – and shot him in the middle of his red forehead about two inches below the silver hairline. His hair had been grey the last time I saw him. That was about 15 years ago. My first arrest. His eyes went out. He fell off the chair onto his face. My hands were already reaching for what I needed, sweeping my notebooks into a briefcase with my works, junk, and a box of shells. I stuck the gun into my belt, and stepped out into the corridor. . .<sup>13</sup>

*The Naked Lunch* – which John Ciardi called "a masterpiece of its own genre – a monumentally moral descent into the hell of narcotics addiction"<sup>14</sup> – is vastly more than a documentary on the inner life of a junkie. Burroughs takes narcotics addiction, and the hallucinations that attend it, as a metaphor of contemporary city life: its desperation, its meaninglessness, its intrinsic and endless violence. Anthony Burgess has called Burroughs' work "a kind of mad science fiction, liter-

ature as a total release from the bondages of gravity and inhibition alike, sometimes baffling, often exhilarating.”<sup>15</sup>

And that comment, particularly the last word, suggest some of the quality of the violence-charged fiction that is now so widespread: it is exhilarating precisely because it faces the truth of existence rather than hiding it behind euphemism and symbol. No matter how painful, truth carries with it a charge of intensity that can be richly satisfying and this accounts for the fact that the writers discussed here, while they began in obscurity and were initially unpopular, have won sizeable audiences and great respect from their peers.

The fiction of Hubert Selby Jr. – of which his first book, *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, is still the best known – presents a world of brutalized and uncaring men and women who treat each other, within their own context, as badly as Nazi guards treated the concentration camp inmates. Selby’s urban American slum dwellers live close to the edge of total violence. They rape and beat each other. Their sexuality is expressed in terms of outright violence and exploitation. One story, *Tralala*, presents a gang of teenagers who are using a prostitute and, in the wildness of their drunken emotions, move as if by casual accident from sex to violence:

... she lay there naked on the seat and their shadows hid her pimples and scabs and she drank flipping her tits with the other hand and somebody shoved the beer can against her mouth and they all laughed and Tralala cursed and spit out a piece of tooth and someone shoved it again and they laughed and yelled and the next one mounted her and her lips were split this time and the blood trickled to her chin and someone mopped her brow with a beer-soaked handkerchief and another can of beer was handed to her and she drank and yelled about her tits and another tooth was chipped and the split in her lips was widened and everyone laughed and she laughed and she drank more and more and soon she passed out and they slapped her a few times and she mumbled and turned her head ...<sup>16</sup>

First sex is a game, then violence is a game, and by the end of a long and powerful paragraph, *Tralala* is left for dead. The effect is that of raw, hard-edged poetry; the mood conveyed is moral desolation – and yet, again, a bitter truth, buttressed by a firm and accurate style. Josephine Hendin has summed up Selby’s work, and in the process said a great deal about this approach to writing:

This is Selby’s vision of a culture’s bedrock psyche, a portrait of an American mind *gone the limit* (italics added) in its acceptance of cruelty as life’s only fixed principle. Selby perceives pain, whether inflicted or felt, as the basic bond between people. If he does not gloat over the cruelty he describes, Selby nevertheless sees nothing else, nothing but the terror of those dismal, festering characters who spring from his imagination so fully formed in their vileness. He does write of them with love, with an energy and purity of style that is absolute in its insistence on your glimmer of recognition and assent: is their life yours? Whether it is or not, reading Selby is like being mugged.<sup>17</sup>

But it is also more than that Selby, having created his

characters in all their pathetic ugliness, seems to reach out and forgive them. “Selby’s genius is that he compels us to feel”, Dotson Rader<sup>18</sup> has suggested, and this, if not genius, is at least a large accomplishment. His work implies that we must accept the existence of endless violence in his characters, and yet feel for them despite our knowledge of what they are.

*Because they are like us.* Or, at least, they resemble the part of “us” that is atavistically violent and uncontrollable, that still connects with the pre-civilized impulses we have covered over with a sheen of social restraint. Norman Mailer is a novelist who asks us to go further than Selby – he asks us not to look at his characters and sympathize; rather, he suggests that we *identify* with the violent impulses and actions of his protagonists. He does this most spectacularly in *An American Dream*. His central figure and narrator, Steve Rojack, murders his wife, exults in it, and spends the rest of the novel escaping the consequences. For Rojack, murder is a release – from the psychic pressures of his successful life, from the cancerous poisons of resentment and self-hatred, from the threat of encroaching middle age, from his rage at women. In the murder scene, his wife tells him she doesn’t love him, and immediately he feels lost: “I had opened a void – I was now without a center. Can you understand? I did not belong to myself any longer. Deborah had occupied my center.”<sup>19</sup> She then taunts him by telling him of her lovers and the sex acts she has performed with them. He strikes her brutally, and she fights back by trying to grasp his penis. He goes into a frenzy that begins in violent rage and ends in a kind of exultation:

I struck her a blow on the back of the neck, a dead cold chop which dropped her to a knee, and then hooked an arm about her head and put a pressure on her throat ... For a moment I did not know if I could hold her down ... For ten or 20 seconds she strained in balance, and then her strength began to pass, it passed over to me, and I felt my arm tightening about her neck. My eyes were closed. I had the mental image I was pushing with my shoulder against an enormous door which would give inch by inch to the effort.

One of her hands fluttered up to my shoulder and tapped it gently. Like a gladiator admitting defeat, I released the pressure on her throat, and the door I had been opening began to close. But I had had a view of what was on the other side of the door, and heaven was there, some quiver of jewelled cities shining in the glow of a tropic dust, and I thrust against the door once more and hardly felt her hand leave my shoulder, I was driving now with force against that door: spasms began to open in me, and my mind cried out then, ‘Hold back! You’re going too far, hold back!’ I could feel a series of orders whip like tracers of light from my head to arm, I was ready to obey, I was trying to stop, but pulse packed behind pulse in a pressure up to thunderhead: some black-billed lust, some desire to go ahead not unlike the instant one comes in a woman against her cry that she is without protection came bursting with rage out of me and my mind exploded in a fireworks of rockets, stars, and hurtling embers, the arm about her neck leaped against the whisper I could still feel murmuring in her throat, and crack I choked her harder, and crack I choked her again and crack I gave her payment – never halt now – and crack the door flew

open and the wire tore in her throat, and I was through the door, hatred passing from me in after wave, illness as well, rot and pestilence, nausea – I was floating – I was weary with a most honorable fatigue and my flesh seemed new. I had not felt so nice since I was twelve . . .<sup>20</sup>

The scene is as morally repellent as any in recent literature; it is also as powerful as any that Mailer, in a remarkable career, has produced. It makes violence into a perverse kind of poetry, and invites us to join the murderer in his joy. It thus represents a climax in the literature of violence, and in the acceptance of the ultimate immorality as a part of emotional life in which the reader is asked to share.

The violence Mailer depicts, however much it may reflect modern history, is a personal violence. But there is also in much recent fiction a strain of revolutionary violence, in which the author calls the readers to action in a struggle that will be profoundly violent. The French-Canadian separatist novelist Hubert Aquin, for instance, has a character speak glowingly of a future filled with violence:

It will be time to strike, in the back if possible. The time will have come to kill and to organize destruction by the ancient doctrines of strife and the anonymous guns of the guerrilla! It will be time to replace parliamentary battles with real ones. After two centuries of agony, we will burst out in disordered violence, in an uninterrupted series of attacks and shocks, the black fulfillment of a project of total love . . .

In this, Aquin reflects the often-expressed view of extreme New Left writers in the United States and in the Third World – that freedom can be achieved only by violence, and that this violence is an expression of love.<sup>21</sup>

An audience of a certain size was ready for writers like Kosinski, Selby and Mailer before they produced their books. It was prepared for them not only by the great public acts of violence we have all lived through (in imagination, if not in fact) but also by the transformation of our collective view of our private selves that began around the time of the World War I. This transformation proceeded from the writings of Sigmund Freud and all those who followed, adapted, plagiarized, and interpreted his works. Freud, in his *Oedipus* and *Elektra* theories, suggested plainly that murder was within all of us; and this point of view, as it spread first through the medical profession and then through avant-garde literature and finally through the mass media, became one of the governing ideas of our culture – as pervasive for us as the religious ideas of previous centuries. As W.H. Auden describes Freud's influence

*To us he is no more a person*

*Now but a whole climate of opinion*

*Under whom we conduct our differing lives:*<sup>22</sup>

Freud saw the story of the king who killed his father and married his mother as the archetypal human drama, the expression of our most deeply buried wishes. He saw this first in himself, in his famous self-analysis. Then he saw it in humankind – both men and women,

in different forms – and finally by the forces of his persuasive brilliance he imposed his view on western civilization. As he stated:

I have found love of the mother and jealousy of the father in my own case too, and now believe it to be a general phenomenon of early childhood . . . the gripping power of *Oedipus Rex*, in spite of all the rational objections to the inexorable fate that the story pre-supposes, becomes intelligible . . . the Greek myth seizes on a compulsion which everyone recognizes because he has felt traces of it in himself. Every member of the audience was once a budding Oedipus in phantasy, and this dream-fulfillment played out in reality causes everyone to recoil in horror . . .<sup>23</sup>

Not any more: or at least, not so much anymore. Because by now we who have lived through both the Age of Freud and the Age of Auschwitz accept as part of literature that innate violence which is so clearly and so permanently a part of life.

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# Violence in the Literature of Children and Young Adults

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## Chapter One

# Introduction

This paper is concerned with the depiction of violence in some areas of literature created especially for children and adolescents. Children's literature exists almost independently of children – they do not produce it or criticize it; they do not even always read widely within the material written especially for them. Children are taught to read at about the age of six; a scant half-dozen years later they are eager to leave children's books behind and to move on to participate in adult reading.

In this study, children's reading preferences and habits are first discussed in some detail, to provide a context for the examination of their literature.

In a society of mass communication, a medium such as television – which requires only passive participation – which involves an active interaction with print – may easily become dominant, while a medium such as reading – which involves an active interaction with print – may become subordinate. Reading is a skill children's ability to read may be at such a low level that it is virtually impossible for them to have an interest in books.

Personal inclination and, sometimes, deficient skills are responsible for perpetuating a preference for reading material of little literary or artistic merit. Material that primarily bases its appeal on plot, with little regard for style, characterization, setting, and so on, is often preferred. The sentimental interlude, the mysterious plot, the violent episode are exploited in the effort to satisfy a demand that – if successful – the product also creates. Ease of reading and an entertaining strong story line are important factors in the appeal of books to young children. When they first begin to appreciate stories, and first begin to read for themselves, they are too young to be nostalgic, too immature to be contemplative, and too unskilled to be discriminating. Children respond immediately and directly to the dramatic emphases in their own literature and in the mass culture of their environment. Their reading, their language and lore, and their imaginations in some measure reflect the presence of elements of violence.

The first body of literature many children meet

includes the nursery tales from Mother Goose and from the realm of fairy and folk lore. Generations old, the accretions of nursery stories interest sociologists and psychologists for the insights they present into social organization and the human psyche. Adult literature draws upon the mythological motifs present in this lore, and this anonymous literature faithfully preserves those elements that children find useful. These timeless tales and the simple stories created especially for children are directed toward both the cognitive and affective domains of learning.

Illustration plays an obvious role in children's books. Pictures clarify symbols and situations, and pictures may also be related to the violent content of the literature. Illustrated books are those in which the illustrations carry the story. In both types, the violent activity can be emphasized or softened by the illustrations. The role of illustration in relation to violence in children's books is considered in some detail in this paper.

A picture book is the child's first introduction to reading. The pictures often show the world of Mother Goose or introduce the fantastic land where animals are people and fairies may suddenly appear.

It was not possible in this paper to consider all areas of children's literature. Among the areas that have been ignored are the anthropomorphic stories written by individual authors for young children. Numerous examples come to mind: the *Paddington Bear* and *Dr. Seuss* series, the delightful tales of Beatrix Potter, Hans Christian Andersen, and Oscar Wilde. These stories all could be examined for elements of violence, which many of them contain in varying degrees. However, these works were not included in the study because of external constraints and because many authors, being consciously aware of the vulnerability that goes with the age of their audience, are very careful about the material they present to children. Violence, when it occurs in these first fantasies, may well be a minor note in a coherent composition, presented to serve a purpose. Some modern writers who have used violent themes are mentioned in the chapter on illustration, but the long-established authors who have made a controlled use of

violence in the first stories given to children have not been considered.

Young children are eager to read their first books. Fairy tales and simple stories come into children's lives at a time when they are particularly receptive to stories but have not yet developed preferences in reading. These preferences, however, are not long in developing; for that reason, this paper does not consider certain areas such as science fiction, mythology, westerns, or mysteries. Reading in these categories tends to be from strong personal preference.

Mythology, for example, is the literature of archetype and the repository of a cultural heritage. Mythology as expressed in short tales and in epic literature contains much violence. The physical violence is often couched in extravagant terms, while the psychological violence may be layered in symbol. A study of classical and northern mythology would reveal many examples of covert and overt violence, but this mythology is not widely read by children. Girls who read well may develop an early interest in mythology, just as boys who read well and widely may develop an interest in science fiction, but these categories of reading are minority pursuits among young adolescents.

Most children pursue a narrower course in their reading. As food for their fantasy lives, their preference may be for comic books. As food for their intellectual and emotional lives, their reading may be extended in juvenile novels, junior versions of adult novels. A later chapter deals with the realistic junior novel, a genre that came into its own in the 1960s, with the swell of publication for a waiting adolescent market. At the same time that adolescents are reading these junior novels, they are also reading the literature produced for the adult market. Evidence of this is presented in the chapter on children's reading.

In a span of five to seven years, children review the body of literature written especially for them. If they do not have guidance in that review, they may overlook material that would promote intellectual and emotional growth, material that would help them develop an acceptable value system, stressing concepts of respect for the individual and of responsibility for society. Instead, children may read extensively from material that presents violence as a universally appropriate and attractive solution to problems.

As a didactic purpose underlies much of the material given to children or adolescents, a moral judgment is often placed on the display of violence. The danger is that the value judgment is not internalized, or even realized, by the children. The moral tag is sometimes so submerged as to be lost in the description of violence. The danger lies, then, not in presenting violence, but in advocating it by repeated example as redress and resolution for many situations.

Violence has its place in the literature of childhood as in the literature of adulthood. But violence in literature should not teach the child to be violent, nor to accept or

expect violence; rather, the literature should teach the child to control violence and to relegate it to an appropriate position. Literature should help children to distinguish these facets of violence. How successfully and to what extent the literature read by children and adolescents does this is another question.

## Children's Reading

The reading abilities and habits of children and adolescents have been assessed in numerous studies. The conclusions drawn after sifting the evidence might be that children generally do not read as much or as well as they did one or two generations ago, nor do they read as many books of literary value. However, comparison of children's reading habits in the 1930s, the 1950s, and the 1970s cannot be made directly because of changes in the patterns of education and the emergence of alternatives of literary pursuit – mass paperbacks, comic books, television, the recording industry, and organized sports for youngsters. Thus the conclusions about comparative studies in reading must be open to qualification.

A government report, *A Language for Life*, issued in the United Kingdom in 1975, stated that:

There is no firm evidence upon which to base comparison between standards of English today and those of before the war, and comparisons ventured are sometimes based on questionable assumptions. Nevertheless, standards of reading and writing need to be raised to fulfil the increasingly exacting demands made upon them by modern society.<sup>1</sup>

This report was concerned with literacy, and it did admit that literacy was not increasing and that, among certain children 11 years old and under, it was in all probability declining.<sup>2</sup> Literacy means more than an ability to read; it is the ability to comprehend that which is read. Reading is a thinking process, more than just an exercise in identifying shapes, and it requires a diet that will provide nutritional values.

The Commission of Inquiry that produced *A Language for Life* made use of a report by F. Whitehead et al., prepared for the Schools Council on the subject of children's reading interests.<sup>3</sup> Whitehead, in turn, duplicated an earlier study by A. Jenkinson, done in 1930s, in order to indicate development of reading taste over time. As both of these studies concerned a preference in reading rather than research into the ability to read, a brief summation is pertinent here.

In 1938, A.J. Jenkinson conducted a leisure-time reading survey among 3,000 adolescents, aged 12 to 16, in urban schools of east central England.<sup>4</sup> He included only students in "A" (good) streams in the schools, who

were presumed therefore to read well and to have literary tastes. This was done to forestall the charge of examining the literary taste of the non-literary. Contemporary research would be concerned with the aspect of the non-literary taste and its effect in the classroom today. Teachers of English literature in the 1960s and 1970s have had to cope with increased numbers of uninterested students who have had their formal education requirements deliberately lengthened from pre-war times. Jenkinson, in those pre-war days, found that boys and girls read novels written for adults. He asked youngsters to list books they had read over the previous month. The list of titles they mentioned is quite astonishing. The volunteered reading is very like a list published in the U.S. by the National Council of Teachers of English as recommended preparation for college entrance in the humanities. These children were given time to think about their lists before they submitted them to their teachers, so there may have been an inclination to note "acceptable" choices as well as other choices. Defoe, Dickens, R.L. Stevenson, Charlotte Bronte, and Thomas Hughes appeared again and again as favourite authors. Sir Walter Scott, John Buchan, H. Rider Haggard, G.K. Chesterton, Edgar Allan Poe and H.G. Wells were also frequently named.

The girls indicated a greater range of both author and reading material than did the boys. They put Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* alongside childhood books such as Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*, Kingsley's *Water Babies* and Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*. Girls also tended to hold on to their childhood longer than boys; they included the occasional fairy tale, such as Ruskin's *King of the Golden River* and Kiping's *Jungle Books*.

The reading of these children would not appear to be a cause for concern. Yet there was concern, particularly about the adolescent boys. Teachers and parents were afraid that cinema-going and the reading of much worthless trash would lead to future worthlessness and irresponsibility. The interest of boys in reading mysteries, cheap thrillers, and stories with aggressive action was noted. The specific worthless trash referred to was

"bloods" or comic papers. The British term "bloods" refers to the story papers or magazines published for boys, containing swashbuckling adventure and ghastly tales – in short, an ample supply of blood, guts, and gore. These magazines ran the gamut from *Boy's Own Paper* through the prototypes of the comics that caused such consternation in the 1950s on both sides of the Atlantic. "Bloods" were also read by girls, but with less avid interest; they preferred magazines published expressly for them – magazines which stressed the domestic, romantic, or school story in which violence and direct aggressive action play a much smaller role. The boys reported as most popular those magazines in which most violence occurred (*Comic Cuts, Magnet, Wizard*). Less popular were those papers (*Boy's Own Paper, Scout, Rainbow*) considered by adults to combine violent action with such redeeming factors as independence, courage, and patriotism – magazines that satisfied the appetite for violence in a more palatable way.

As for the effects of cinema-going, Jenkinson found that the cinema was the most accessible cultural product and that it had a strong interest for children. A third of the sample went to the cinema once a week, but the study could derive no firm indications of a connection between reading and cinema attendance. These children did not indicate that movies increased or decreased their appetite for reading. It seemed to Jenkinson, on the basis of his data, that good readers read everything from "bloods" through more standard literature, while poor readers tended only to read comic magazines – and those to a lesser degree than the avid readers. His conclusions foreshadowed what more rigorous statistical analysis of post-war years was to determine about consumption of media generally and reading habits in particular. Jenkinson's study was done at a time when there was also widespread interest in researching the reading habits of children and adults in the United States. Similar conclusions were being drawn there.

Since the 1930s, there have been several additional factors to influence children's reading habits. Certain social and cultural habits have seemed likely to diminish the importance of reading as a recreational pursuit. The increased affluence and mobility of many families has meant that recreational interests more expensive than reading could be pursued. The advent of television has been the single most significant factor, and it has increased the effects of film on the habit of reading. In mitigation of these factors, there has been an increase in the amount of publishing specifically for children and juveniles. The paperback revolution of the 1950s made both adult and juvenile titles readily available in a mass market. Public libraries grew and, significantly for children, school libraries became more and more common. These libraries support the curriculum and also provide a wide range of recreational reading.

Jenkinson's study was repeated on a broader base

and wider scale by F. Whitehead et al., in *Children's Reading Interests*, published in 1975. Whitehead's team sent a questionnaire to 7,800 children between the ages of 10 and 15. The survey concluded that children were reading fewer books in the 1970s than they had read in the late 1930s. Jenkinson had found that his respondents – achieving students – read between four and six books a month, but the 1975 survey found representative students reading only about three books a month. This diminished figure of book reading corresponds with the findings of Hilde Himmelweit in the mid-1950s in one of the seminal studies of the effect of television on reading.<sup>5</sup>

Whitehead's team found that fewer adult titles involving long narrative were reported, and that junior novels and titles in series had emerged as popular choices. Old favourites such as *Black Beauty*, *Treasure Island*, *Little Women*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Wind in the Willows* occurred on the lists as did a number of titles designated as juvenile non-quality narratives. The non-quality author most often mentioned was Enid Blyton, a British author who produced over 200 titles on the artistic level of *The Bobbsey Twins*. Authors writing for the adult market also interested youngsters. Alistair MacLean, Ian Fleming, and Alfred Hitchcock, represented as favourite authors by the respondents, were listed by the investigators as producing non-quality reading. Non-quality was also the designation given to books like *Sex and Savagery of Hell's Angels* by Jan Hudson and *Skinhead* by Richard Allen, books named as popular reading by teens in the mid-1970s.

While the frequency of book reading has declined, the frequency of comic book reading apparently has not; it constitutes the greatest proportion of magazine reading. This popular reading habit includes, for girls, an extension into pop music and romance magazines. The Whitehead report concludes that while most children between the ages of 10 and 15 regularly read a number of comics, and many read some books, there is a sizeable minority of both sexes who do not read any books in their leisure time. This minority increases with age until, at age 14 and over, nearly a third of the girls and 40 per cent of the boys are not interested in reading.

Canadian experience bears out the reading patterns uncovered in both American and British studies. L.F. Ashley, in *Children's Reading and the 1970s* discusses the results of a questionnaire circulated to 1500 children in grades four to seven in the Vancouver area.<sup>6</sup> Twenty per cent of the sample gave mysteries and adventure stories as preferred choices for leisure-time reading. Other choices were ghost tales, comics, horse and animal stories, followed by *Nancy Drew* books for girls and the *Hardy Boys* series for boys. Science fiction and humour and joke books were also popular. Boys demonstrated the greatest interest in any mention of sports books; they were also interested in adventure stories, mysteries, thrillers, ghost stories, and war books. *The Hardy Boys*,

intrepid sleuths, are generally involved in solving some mystery in a fast-paced plot. The counterpart for girls, *Nancy Drew*, is a more genteel but equally intrepid problem solver. Nancy unravels legal problems with more inspiration than her lawyer-father. The occasional kidnapping or struggle, to which either Nancy or a Hardy boy is more than equal, is the level of violence presented in these series. Girls are attracted to adventure stories, and they read ghost stories and mysteries on a par with boys. Their interest in comics declines with age, and they are not as interested in humour or joke books. Girls substitute stories about animals, fairy tales, and myths or legends; and as they reach the pre-teen years, an interest in romance or pop stars develops. The top 50 most remembered books were listed; these titles were choices given more than twice. Of these choices, 23 were series books – *The Hardy Boys*, *Nancy Drew*, *Cherry Ames*, *Trixie Belden*, *The Power Boys*, and so on. Few classics of children's literature, such as *Tom Sawyer*, *Little Women*, and *Black Beauty*, were named. Jack London's *Call of the Wild* and Stevenson's *Treasure Island* are perennial choices. The children also mentioned as favourite reading, the "James Bond" books, *The Dirty Dozen*, *Batman*, and *Crazy Horse*. Children in grades six and seven reported remembering best *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *The Rise and Fall of Adolf Hitler*, *Sand Pebbles*, *Sink the Bismarck*, Michener's *Hawaii*, *Life of Hitler*, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, *Hell's Angels*, *Lord of the Flies*, and *She*.

There was little congruence with either the British or American listings from pre-war research on reading. The interest in adult titles was apparent, and there was a diminishing interest in children's literature *per se*. Terman and Lima, in *Children's Reading*, an American study from the 1930s, had produced a list of much more standard children's fare, cited by the children as their reading.<sup>7</sup> From comparison, it may be clearly seen that the 1930s favourites (all standard classics) had lost ground in readership, and only four titles maintained their popularity. These were *Tom Sawyer*, *Black Beauty*, *Swiss Family Robinson*, and *The Jungle Book*, although none were in the top 10 favourites in Ashley's 1970 study. Seven young girls read and remembered warmly *Little Women*, but one little girl voted Jacqueline Susann's *Valley of the Dolls*, an adult best-seller of the 1960s, as a memorable book from childhood.

It is highly unlikely that the child borrowed *Valley of the Dolls* from the children's department of a public library or from a school library. The book, which caused a minor censorship flurry at the time of publication, received a full share of promotional advertising. It was made into a film and was widely available in paperback and through book-club distribution. The point is that, with less than adequate guidance, a child may have read widely and yet may have never read a significant book.<sup>8</sup>

This statement is also supported in part by a *Children's Services Study* done for the Regina Public

Library in 1976 on the reading and television viewing habits of children.<sup>9</sup> A sample of Regina school children were queried about their recreational and informational needs. The children, 540 in all, between the ages of six and 13, were interviewed by members of a research team. They were not asked to name specific books, although they sometimes did; rather, they were asked "What kinds of books do you read most often?" They gave a fiction choice four times more often than a non-fiction choice. Twenty-three per cent of the sample – 122 of the 540 children – responded immediately that their favourite reading consisted of comics or humour magazines. Another 13 per cent preferred mysteries. The only category larger than mysteries or comics was an answer that was unspecified as to type (fiction/non-fiction), for example, "any stories about animals" or "stories about people, romance" et cetera. Following comics, humour or joke magazines, and mysteries, children name adventure stories, western, horror and monster tales, and series books as favourite reading.

There are statistically significant sex-linked characteristics in reading which determine choices between fiction and non-fiction – girls read more fiction than do boys – and among the genres in fiction. Both sexes liked comic and horror tales. Girls, however, showed more interest in mysteries, mythology, and fairy tales than did boys. Boys were more interested in adventure stories, including police dramas and westerns, and in science fiction. Series books, once again *Nancy Drew* and *The Hardy Boys*, were chosen as favourites by both sexes. A favourite author was Alfred Hitchcock, a syndicated authorship that produces the popular *The Three Investigators* series for juveniles as well as mysteries for adults. Another favourite was Judy Blume, who writes junior novels for girls.<sup>10</sup>

Magazines were mentioned less frequently than books; noticeably absent from general cognizance were the magazines specifically published for children and juveniles. The most popular magazine read in Regina was *The Canadian*, which accompanies the Saturday edition of the newspapers, *The Leader-Post*. Some girls mentioned *Miss Chatelaine*; more read the adult magazine, *Chatelaine*. Boys named the occasional sports magazine. Children's interest in newspapers, like their interest in magazines, was low. Their newspaper reading most frequently reflected an interest in the comics and the television guide.

The children surveyed in Regina, and in the Borough of York in Metropolitan Toronto, where this survey was pretested, watched a lot of television. They equalled and exceeded the provincial averages of 12 hours per week for young children, a figure established in a research study produced for the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media.<sup>11</sup> Thirty-three per cent of the sample reported that they watched television often, defined as three to five programs a day; another 45 per cent reported watching television always, defined as more than five programs a day. Estimating conservatively

that a program is half an hour long, Regina children were watching television from 10½ to 12½ hours weekly. Judging from the number of hour-long, and longer, programs named as favourites, this estimate does, indeed, seem conservative. Little of the television that children watched was educational; they reported watching adult programming in the evening hours, and cartoons and game shows televised at convenient hours for children – for example, *The Flintstones* at lunchtime, and game shows at the supper hour. The amount of viewing reported does suggest that television is replacing books in the lives of some children.

However, the evidence about the relative interest expressed in books and television is much more complicated than an either/or situation. *Communications in Ontario*, a 1974 survey of public attitudes, documented the uneasiness felt by parents about the relationship between television and learning.<sup>12</sup> Although many adults feel that film is an excellent teacher, particularly for young children, it was suggested that “the educational efficacy of television diminishes over time. Television may foster laziness and impede a child’s development of basic learning and reading skills.”<sup>13</sup> Parents thought that children became engrossed in viewing to the detriment of other activities, one of which was reading. It was concluded that books were unimportant to the 11- to 13-year-old children interviewed in this survey.

As children approach the teen years, there is usually a diminution of interest in reading. More boys than girls are likely to stop reading entirely. The pre-teen years are also the years for peak television watching. Television plays an ambiguous role in relation to reading. It can displace reading, or some other activity, for some children, just as almost any other activity can displace reading. But television can also promote reading. The children in the Regina survey were asked if they had ever read a book because of a program on television.<sup>14</sup> Overwhelmingly, they said they had. A number of children volunteered a particular title or titles that television had introduced. Many of these were books for adults – *The Day of the Jackal*, *Airport*, *Jaws*, and *The Towering Inferno*. Others were television spinoffs from favourite programs, such as *Six Million Dollar Man*, *Star Trek*, *The Flintstones*, *The Partridge Family*, *Planet of the Apes*, and *Charlie Brown*. Television was also responsible for an interest in *Little House on the Prairie*, *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *Swiss Family Robinson*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *Oliver Twist*, and animal stories such as *Lassie* and *Black Beauty*. Harkening back to the 1930s and the pre-television era, it was noted that children who read many books also read many comics. In the 1970s, these children also apparently watch much television. Children who use one medium extensively are likely to consume all media in quantity.

Perhaps because of mass media, including promotional advertising, as well as the pervasive presence of

television and the paperback revolution, the gap – if one ever did exist – between adult and children’s reading tastes has narrowed. The interest in reading peaks around Grade Five at about age 10. Thereafter, children’s interest in reading may be diverted into other activities, or their preferences in reading tend to become concentrated. As they approach the teen years, children are less willing to experiment in reading widely. They rapidly move from the literature written especially for their level into the equivalent literature written for adults. The pursuit of mediocre reading at a child’s level becomes the pursuit of mediocre reading at an adult’s level.

Mills and Boon, the British sister company to Harlequin Books in Canada, publishers of romantic novels for women, have reported that their average reader is becoming younger.<sup>15</sup> The company has done two surveys on readership, in 1968 and 1974. Reporting on overall steady upswing of sales, the company notes that the greatest increase in readership is among women between the ages of 19 and 24. Public libraries report many requests for these novels, published at the rate of eight a month. Young girls, about 15, are requesting these romances, which are harmless in the sense that they do not feature violence, pornography, or sexual obscenity.

Boys, to a much greater extent than girls, read the books that do contain violence or sadistic and pornographic elements. Such “mature” material is widely available, and the question is whether these mature elements produce trauma in certain children by disturbing a process of social and emotional maturation. Pamela Hansford Johnson, in considering the effect of the books owned and read by the young murderers in the British “Moors Murders” case of the 1960s, asserts that a deleterious effect is amply demonstrated.<sup>16</sup> She agreed with the same principles of censorship that were later advocated in the report of the Longford Committee Investigating Pornography in Britain in 1972.<sup>17</sup> This report was controversial and it followed the equally controversial *Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography* in the United States in 1970.<sup>18</sup> The presence of violence in the mass media (as violence related to pornography and obscenity) was the focus of these reports. The issue of censorship that such reports raise, and the application of censorship to the media consumption of juveniles are not, however, the direct concerns of this paper on the reading habits of young persons and the violent content of their literature.

Children and adolescents do read material that is violent, and their vulnerability to reading material that is labelled “for mature readers” is worthy of consideration. Children read both the literature for children and the literature for adults. They quickly learn to read the mediocre fare. They begin their reading habit by hearing and following nursery tales; they then turn to the fairy and folk tales and simple stories written

especially for them. As they begin to read independently, they choose comic books or materials promoted through the mass appeal of movies, television, advertising, and the print industry. It would appear that they miss much of the quality literature written for children, in their race to read either the high- or low-quality literature written for adults.

## Chapter Three

# Children's Imagination and Folklore

Do children learn violence from their literature and their exposure to the other mass media, or do children's literature and other media merely reflect the violence that children already feel? Violence and aggressive impulses are part of a child's emotional growth. Child psychologists assert that the basic conflict of pre-adolescent years centres on socialization into a community and on aggression versus submission. Children have to conform to social restraints without sacrificing a self-concept based on a sense of individuality and independence.

The role of literature in arousing feelings of violence in children is not easily ascertainable. It would appear that children meet violence in their thoughts and in their fantasies and environment to a much greater degree than is generally realized. Violence becomes a pattern of thought early in life.

In 1971, the CBC produced a series, *Images of Childhood*, in which young children were asked, in one of the segments, to tell about their fantasies.<sup>1</sup> The children defined imagination and its uses, and then revealed their daydreams and their dreams while sleeping. Their daydreams were of material success. The images that occurred in their fantasies during sleep were of violence. A little girl dreamed of being chased by a witch. An older boy dreamed of being Superman, trapped and about to lose his power. In most of the fantasies, children cast themselves as victims. They were chased by lions and monsters, tossed to alligators, "zapped into a mountain", about to be eaten or killed, when they awoke in fright or were rescued. With the youngest children, mothers were identified as effective adults who did the rescuing.

Books and comic books contributed to the fantasies as much as did any other medium. Horror stories, movies, and police dramas were mentioned, and, clearly, ideas about frightening situations were derived from external sources. Still, reactions to the stimulus of books and film are highly individual. A boy mentioned watching a golf tournament on television, and then dreaming that he was an ant in a sand trap with a golf ball hurtling toward him. So, the human being is quite capable of manufacturing his own horror, independent

of external suggestion. When these children did mention sources for their fantasies, the sources were frequently *Dracula* movies or horror tales – the kind of mediocre dramas that they themselves identify as popular reading and viewing material.

Monster stories, books of "sick" jokes, and humorous books were chosen as favourite reading by a large number of boys in the Regina study discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>2</sup> Girls were not as interested in these books. The sex difference here reflects the orientation of boys to literature containing violence as comedy. The practical joke, violence as wit, humour, and ridicule are classic modes for expressing aggression. Boys, more than girls, are expected to be aggressive. Coming to grips with assertion and aggression through finding acceptable expressions for them is a difficulty for most human beings. Often it is asserted that a vicarious experience through literature enables children to release their emotional tension and express their violence in an acceptable and harmless form. Anthony Pietropinto, a psychiatrist, believes this and defends nonsense literature and its variants on this ground of vicarious expression.<sup>3</sup> Nonsense humour consists chiefly of short poems or limericks that relate, in a whimsical way, odd or grotesque themes. The nonsense relies on verbal play, puns, gibes, or clever gibberish. Pietropinto quotes some of the violent nonsense that appeals to adolescents:

Willie, with a thirst for gore  
Nailed the baby to the door,  
Mother said, with humour quaint,  
"Willie, dear, don't mar the paint."

Willie poisoned Auntie's tea,  
Auntie died in agony,  
Uncle came and looked quite vexed,  
"Really, Will," said he, "What next?"

In these rhymes, Willie is perpetrator of the nasty tricks, in the following rhyme, Gentle Jane is on the receiving end:

Gentle Jane once chanced to sit  
Where some rifle bullets hit;  
Though she had no bumps or sprains,  
Gentle Jane felt shooting pains.

The Spring 1977 newsletter for students at a Toronto high school, Parkdale Collegiate, printed the following student submission as a limerick of the times:

A parachute jumper named Trotter  
Was so drunk that he started to totter.  
When he leaped in the sky,  
Pulled the zip – on his fly!  
And they picked Trotter up with a blotter.

Examples can be multiplied. The verses are relished because of the incongruous reaction following upon an act of violence. The horror aroused by the accused axe murderer, Lizzie Borden, was immediately converted into a street jingle:

Lizzie Borden took an axe,  
And gave her father forty whacks;  
When she saw what she had done,  
She gave her mother forty-one!

These verses are like the ghoulish rhymes repeated by children to each other, preferably while sitting huddled together in the dark. The object of ghost story sessions is to frighten, and several verses or tales culminate in the teller suddenly screaming or grabbing the listener. Iona and Peter Opie in *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*,<sup>4</sup> record a number of spooky rhymes circulating among British schoolchildren in the 1950s. Dialect or accent rather than content identify these verses as British. Many Canadian children would recognize the doggerel about the woman who:

...in a churchyard sat, oo-oooh  
Very short and very fat, oo-oooh  
She saw three corpses carried in, oo-oooh  
Very tall and very thin, oo-oooh.  
Woman to the corpses said, oo-oooh  
Shall I be like you when I'm dead? oo-oooh  
Corpses to the woman said, oo-oooh  
Yes, you'll be like us when you're dead, oo-oooh  
Woman to the corpses said . . .  
(scream, grab listener)

Ghost, horror, and monster stories are like the nonsense verses, because these tales also frequently contain incongruous and gruesome elements. Therefore, they too may perform the same function of resolving fears and conflicts by projecting them into an expression that may be confronted and controlled. The fact that boys particularly like these kinds of tales in their reading may, once again, reflect the problem of masculine socialization in this area of aggression control. Children who read this literature of gruesome nonsense and horrible tales learn that adults have felt the rebellious, totally destructive tendencies that dwell in both the conscious and subconscious minds of children. The literature helps children to recognize that, with maturity, there will be an alleviation of and a control over such feelings. As C.S. Lewis suggested, the great gift and comfort of literature is that therein we meet someone who is exactly like ourselves.

The stories that children perpetuate among themselves are not literature in an artistic sense; rather,

they are folklore. Children's folklore frequently tends to be violent and calculated to induce those very nightmares that children recounted for the CBC interview. Some of the stories Canadian children tell, recorded in Edith Fowke's compilation, *Folklore of Canada*<sup>5</sup>, are reprinted here:

**The Cadaver's Arm**  
*Told by Brian Smith, 14, Willowdale, 1973.*

There was this laboratory with ten scientists in it. All of them worked very hard at their work, but one girl especially worked hard. She never took time out for fun, always just working on science, science, science.

Well one day the other nine scientists decided that they were going to play a joke on her. They strung up an arm (a human arm) that was a specimen at the laboratory, in her bedroom while she was out. When she came home that night, the other nine were in a room next door to hers and listening. All of a sudden they heard a scream and they all chuckled to themselves. But then there was a strange silence and they decided to check in on her. They found her in the bathroom eating the arm: she had gone completely insane!

(*Brian heard this from John Briggs, a friend, who said the story was true.*)

**Girlfriend's Legs Cut Off**

*Told by Carolynne Parker, 14, Toronto, 1973.*

Two girls were staying overnight at a friend's house and the one decided to go down and get a glass of milk before bed. A while later the girl who was still in bed heard a thumping at the bottom of the steps. She looked down and there was her girlfriend and someone had cut off her legs.

**Humans Can Lick Hands Too!**  
*Told by Diana Booth, 16, Toronto, 1973.*

There was a girl who had this dog. In her house when she went to bed the dog slept beside her on the carpet. In the middle of the night if she ever heard anything or was wondering if everything was all right she would put her hand down and the dog would lick her hand.

So one night she heard a noise and she put her hand down and the dog licked her hand. Then in the morning she went to the washroom and saw the dog with his throat slit open and written on the wall in blood was: HUMANS CAN LICK HANDS TOO!

The stories may contain factual or literary inconsistencies, but that hardly matters when the objective is to entertain by frightening. It is noticeable that many of the elements in these stories parallel elements in folk and fairy tales. Death, mutilation, and cannibalism are common motifs.

Variants of "The Golden Arm" and "The Corpse's Liver" are told by Toronto schoolchildren – indeed, probably by schoolchildren the English-speaking world over. "The Golden Arm" is recorded by Joseph Jacobs in his collection of *English Fairy Tales*.<sup>6</sup> In the published version, a man marries a young and fair woman who has a golden arm. They are happy, though, truth to tell, the man loves the golden arm more than he loves his wife. When the wife dies, the man puts on deepest black and a great show of mourning. But, for all that, he gets up in the middle of the night, digs up her body, cuts off

the golden arm, and carries it home. He puts the arm under his pillow and, as he is about to sleep, the ghost of his wife appears. Pretending not to be afraid, he asks:

“What hast thou done with thy  
cheeks so red?”

“All withered and wasted away,”  
replied the ghost in a hollow voice.

The litany continues in questions and answers, until the final question, which is answered with a shout and snarl:

“What has thou done with thy  
golden arm?”

“THOU HAST IT!”

The version collected from a Toronto teenager is recounted in *Folklore in Canada*.<sup>7</sup> The teenager’s version is less poetic in rendition than Jacobs’ and is much shorter in the telling. It is told as an anecdote, and concludes with the arm strangling the man.

Jacobs’ note on the origin of “The Golden Arm” mentions the obvious similarity with tales about golden legs. Jacobs also notes the parallel structure in a tale collected by the Grimm brothers, in which an innkeeper’s wife uses the liver of a man hanging on a gallows for a meal. When the ghost visits her, she asks what has become of his hair, his eyes, and so on, concluding with the query about his liver. At that point the ghost (the story-teller), leaps forward with the shout, “THOU HAST DEVOURIED IT!”

“The Corpse’s Liver” (often purportedly a true tale, according to the teller) is still circulating among Toronto teens.<sup>8</sup> The modern version is some variant on the story of a boy sent to the store for meat, who squanders the money and stops by the graveyard on his way home to dig up the liver of a corpse. Frequently it is the liver of a recently deceased relative – a grandparent, uncle, or aunt. The liver is very much enjoyed by the family. (This again is a familiar motif from folklore; one’s own family is particularly tasty.) At night, the corpse returns to claim his liver, repeating “I want my liver,” as he crosses the street, enters the house, climbs the stairs, near the bed, and grabs the boy! Jacobs, writing about “The Corpse’s Liver” and “The Golden Arm”, says:

It is doubtful how far such gruesome topics should be introduced into a book for children, but . . . pity and terror among the little ones is as effective as among the spectators of a [Greek] drama, and they take the same kind of thrill from such stories. They know it is all make-believe just as much as the spectators of a tragedy. Everyone who has enjoyed the blessing of a romantic imagination has been trained up on such tales of wonder.<sup>9</sup>

Children are indeed trained on tales, some of wonder, some of less admirable qualities. The folklore and imaginings of children are replete with violent images. Gruesome lore and language are major interests of childhood.

## Chapter Four

### Mother Goose

The first stories and rhymes that children hear are usually from the world of Mother Goose – a world that nursery-rhyme reformers claim has much violence, too much for introduction into a child's nursery.<sup>1</sup> The claim has some validity. However, the violence is only a part of the total contribution of Mother Goose to the development of children, a small part that resists being expunged, possibly because the expression of violent acts is intimately bound with the traditional recitation and historical roots of Mother Goose.

The name Mother Goose originated in seventeenth century France and was popularized by Charles Perrault. His *Les Contes de la Mère l'Oye* (1697) was a collection of fairy tales, rather than the verses that characterize a Mother Goose today. A Mother Goose, meaning a collection of tales, was published in London in 1729. Many of the verses that now constitute a Mother Goose, in the sense of a collection of nursery rhymes, originated in street handbills printed as early as the 1620s in England.

In Boston, in 1719, the name Mother Goose was used in a reputed work, *Songs for the Nursery or Mother Goose's Melodies*. No copy of this work is known to exist; its bibliographic mystery is part of the evidence for claiming that the actual Mother Goose as a Boston matriarch, long buried in the Old Granary Burying Ground. It is certain that "a Mother Goose book" is most often used as the North American term for any collection of nursery rhymes and riddles, games, lullabies, stories, songs, and snatches.

Whether North American or British in origin, the contents of these nursery rhyme collections are similar. A Mother Goose book can contain as many or as few verses as the publisher wishes. The true nursery rhyme is anonymous. Many verses are doggerel, but many are the works of known authors – the limericks of Edward Lear, the conundrums of Lewis Carroll, the verses of Walter de la Mare, and so on. Some rhymes are standards, without which even the cheapest, most poorly produced cardboard book could not be a proper Mother Goose. Curiously enough, the best-known, most-recited poems also contain the oft-deplored elements of violence. Consider Jack who fell and broke

his crown, and Jill who came tumbling after. Then there is Humpty Dumpty, who suffered such an irreparable fall!<sup>2</sup> What about pussy, flung down the well, or the three blind mice pursued by a knife-wielding farmer's wife? What English-speaking child has not been lulled in babyhood by the verses of "Rock-a-bye Baby"? In the first examples given, Jack and Jill and Humpty Dumpty, the violence is physical and accidental. The violence is physical and purposeful in the cruel treatment of mice and cats. In "Rock-a-bye Baby", an overtone of psychological abuse is added to the physical violence, and both are directed toward the child.<sup>3</sup> This universal lullaby combines two threats, falling and noise, both devastating to the infant.

Behavioural psychologists maintain that infants innately show fear when a loud noise suddenly occurs in their vicinity, when there is a loss of physical support accompanied by a falling sensation, when pain is experienced, and when a sudden movement is made by others as the child is falling asleep.<sup>4</sup> In this lullaby, the baby is threatened by being told that he will be put high on a tree-top where, when the wind blows, his cradle will rock. Mother may even be rocking the child as she unfolds this vignette. When (not even the saving grace of an if) the bough breaks – terrifying crack and jolt – the cradle will fall, down will come baby, bough, cradle and all.<sup>5</sup> The fall is like Humpty Dumpty's – irreparable and totally damaging. What a very good thing it is that baby has no understanding of the words being crooned at him! This lack of language may be a salvation, although the illustrations, in both cheap and quality editions, usually clarify the situation. Baby has been shown, mouth open in surprise, being tumbled from his perch. One modern edition, *Lavender's Blue* (Oxford, 1954), shows a baby secure in a sturdy wooden cradle being carried aloft by four angels around the posters of the crib. As any well-versed child knows, these may be the four angels of bedtime prayers, "one to sing, one to pray, and two to carry my soul away." There is a finality of death about some of these verses and their illustrations, but it is highly unlikely that the image of death is apparent to the children. Death is something that does interest children greatly as they move through the years

from toddler to young adult. But as young children have little or no concept of mortality, particularly their own, the image is something to be curious about rather than something to be feared.

It should be remembered that death was more domestic in the society of Mother Goose. The mention of death is taken as one with the fanciful characters and the curious world of nursery rhyme that children love. Any educator or parent interested in introducing children to language and literature would insist that every child deserves to own a better edition of Mother Goose than the paperback economy variety. Mother Goose contains verses for the child to enjoy and for the sociologist, psychologist, and literary critic to ponder.

Violence is one of the *leit-motifs* that can be explored. Violence and cruelty have been grounds for criticism. In the 1950s, Geoffrey Handley-Taylor issued a short bibliography of nursery-rhyme reform, in which he wrote a brief analysis of nursery rhymes. He claimed that:

The average collection of 200 traditional nursery rhymes contains approximately 100 rhymes which personify all that is glorious and ideal for the child. Unfortunately, the remaining 100 rhymes harbour unsavoury elements. The incidents listed below occur in the average collection and may be accepted as a reasonably conservative estimate based on a general survey of this type of literature.

8 allusions to murder (unclassified)  
2 cases of choking to death  
1 case of death by devouring  
1 case of cutting a human being in half  
1 case of decapitation  
1 case of death by squeezing  
1 case of death by shrivelling  
1 case of death by starvation  
1 case of boiling to death  
1 case of death by drowning  
4 cases of killing domestic animals  
1 case of body-snatching  
21 cases of death (unclassified)  
7 cases relating to the severing of limbs  
1 allusion to a bleeding heart  
1 case of devouring human flesh  
5 threats of death  
1 case of kidnapping  
12 cases of torments and cruelty to human beings and animals  
8 cases of whipping and lashing  
3 allusions to blood  
14 cases of stealing and general dishonesty  
15 allusions to maimed human beings and animals  
1 allusion to undertakers  
2 allusions to graves  
23 cases of physical violence (unclassified)  
1 case of lunacy  
16 allusions to misery and sorrow  
1 case of drunkenness  
4 cases of cursing  
1 allusion to marriage as a form of death  
1 case of scorning the blind  
1 case of scorning prayer  
9 cases of children being lost or abandoned  
2 cases of house burning  
9 allusions to poverty and want

5 allusions to quarrelling

2 cases of unlawful imprisonment

2 cases of racial discrimination

Expressions of fear, weeping, moans of anguish, biting, pain and evidence of supreme selfishness may be found in almost every other page.<sup>6</sup>

If Mother Goose is compared with the corpus of fairy and folk tales with which she shares an inheritance, the incidence of quarrelling, cursing, boiling, devouring of flesh, and cracking of limbs would seem conservative rather than excessive.

A comparison of good-quality popular editions of Mother Goose would bear the above listing out, depending upon the number of rhymes included. Two that have approximately 400 rhymes are Raymond Briggs' *Treasury of Mother Goose Rhymes* (Coward-McCann, 1966) and Marguerite de Angeli's *Book of Nursery and Mother Goose Rhymes* (Doubleday, 1954). These books offer an artistic contrast. The Briggs book, together with its companion volume *The Fairy Tale Treasury* (Hamish Hamilton, 1972) has many violent short tales and verses. The artist shows strong line drawings of ugly people and uses lots of colour to enliven the text. De Angeli's approach is to diminish the excitement and the action of the fewer violent tales that are included by presenting more domestic scenes peopled with dainty children and jovial adults. Her palette is pastel and the illustrations are muted, in the style of Kate Greenaway, generations earlier. Although both books contain approximately the same number of rhymes, Briggs includes the story of Giant Bonaparte who eats naughty children, but de Angeli does not. In Briggs' illustration accompanying this verse, a robust little boy appears to be ably thumbing his nose at the towering giant. On the basis of a glance through these editions, an adult might well select the Briggs book for a boy and the softer more feminine de Angeli book for a girl. Thus an initial choice of books may begin the process of educating boys to the stereotype of bracing, aggressive temperament and girls to the stereotype of gentler disposition.

Brian Wildsmith's *Mother Goose* (Oxford, 1964) is bright and colourful, and might be selected for its appeal to the young child regardless of sex. It is much less violent both in content and in illustration than Briggs' book, but it only contains a hundred or so verses. Like *Lavender's Blue: A Book of Nursery Rhymes* (Oxford, 1954), again with muted drawings and pastel shades, these shorter versions of Mother Goose, with 100 to 200 verses, do not meet the criteria of deplorable incident described by Handley-Taylor in his plea for nursery-rhyme reform. His listing, however, does have an impact in calling attention to the sordid side of Mother Goose.

The reasons for this sordidness and violence are varied. First, and obviously, incidents occur because some rhymes were not written for children's consumption *per se*. They were the doggerel of the

streets in earlier times, from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. In their way, nursery rhymes are social history; if lunatics, scorned cripples, maimed animals, and so on appear in the verses, it is because the verses reflect their times.

The cases of injuring or killing domestic animals are cited as unsavoury elements, but the hunting of animals and the killing of domestic livestock are facts of life. Few people in an agrarian economy such as Mother Goose's society – or, for that matter, twentieth-century rural Ontario – take a sentimental view of animals. Even the life of human beings was held as more dispensable in times past.<sup>7</sup> Disability, whether from accident or illness, was perhaps more visible in the daily life of Mother Goose's world. Death occurred in the home rather than in the hospital or institution as it usually does today. The fate of animals in Mother Goose is hardly unsavoury compared to actual fates of many human beings, particularly defenceless children in the middle ages. *The History of Childhood* (Psychohistory Press, 1974), edited by Lloyd De Meuse, begins with the assertion that "The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken. The further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized and sexually abused." This pattern of life is reflected in Mother Goose. It has even been suggested that simple counting out rhymes to identify who shall be "it" were Druidic formulae for determining human sacrifice. The hypothesis, like many of the tales associated with Druids, is tenuous. "London Bridge is falling down", a nursery game that entraps someone at the end of a sequence, may echo the historical evidence of immuring someone, usually a young child or adolescent, in the foundation of a bridge.

In any of the standard editions of nursery rhymes available today, there is a mixture of cruelty and kindness both to humans and to animals. Children like animals, so animals are a prominent feature of nursery rhymes. Animals are frequently personified and shown to control their situations. They exhibit very human virtues and faults. It was, after all, Goosey Goosey Gander who threw the old man down the stairs for not saying his prayers.<sup>8</sup> Mary's little lamb loved Mary and followed her to school because, as teacher explains to the other children, Mary loves the little lamb and, by inference, treats the lamb with kindness. The pony, Dapple-Grey, was lent to a lady who mistreated him; his owner declares:

I would not lend my pony now  
For all that lady's hire

Against the pussy put down the well, there is the admonition to "love little pussy" and "not pull her tail, nor drive her away." It is naughty boys who try to drown poor pussy cats or who come with bow and arrow, determined to shoot a little sparrow:

"Oh no" said the sparrow  
"I won't make a stew!"  
So he flapped his wings  
And away he flew.

The ethic operating in Mother Goose instructs children to be religious, to be kind to animals, and to be clean, careful, and obedient. Bad kittens lose their mittens and get no pie, but good kittens find their mittens and even wash them after eating their pie.

Hence some of the violence is within the context of learning. Dire consequences are shown to follow certain courses of action. Three children sliding on ice on a river fell in and were drowned. Had these children, so the rhyme tells, slid on dry ground or better yet stayed safe at home, they would not be drowned. This is the "awful warning" school of literature, only incidentally exemplified by Mother Goose. There are other more blatant examples in longer stories written expressly for children, and in the religious or moral verses intended for children's edification. A good example of these verses is provided by a digression into Isaac Watts' *Divine and Moral Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children*, which was first published in 1715 and steadily rose to a peak of popularity in the 1850s.<sup>9</sup> Isaac Watts (1674-1748), an English theologian whose hymns are represented in modern hymnals, wrote these songs for children to give them an alternative to the wanton, idle, and profane songs of the day. He wanted to entertain them but also to direct their thoughts heavenward. The songs stand as a "landmark, early but clear, in the intimate family history of the English child."<sup>10</sup> The divine songs set uncomfortable if not impossible standards for children: they spoke of death and the wages of sin. Grounded in the world of religious belief, these songs surely could inflict more agonies of spirit upon the sensitive child than ever did the verses of Mother Goose who lived in a world of make-believe. Children were encouraged to think about the fact that they might die imminently and be accountable to a record-keeping God Who with:

One stroke of His Almighty Rod  
Shall send young sinners quick to Hell.

Many verses told of assured damnation, "dreadful Hell and everlasting pains." God's love and grace could easily turn to God's vengeance:

... all his love to fury turn  
And strike me dead upon the place.

There was no repentance in the grave, nor pardon for the dead, so children were exhorted to be dutiful and pious while they had the brief breath of life. The *Divine Songs* were always explicit about the danger of delaying personal reform or of the sins of disrespect for parents, jeering, cursing or telling lies:

The Lord delights in them that speak  
The words of Truth; but every liar  
Must have his portion in the lake  
That burns with brimstone and with fire.

Then let me always watch my lips  
Lest I be struck to Death and Hell  
Since God a book of reckoning keeps  
For every lie that children tell.

Isaac Watts' songs were not all frightening; his book actually exhibited a move toward the beginning of the end of the Puritan persecuting love of children. His truly frightening verse is now forgotten in the evolution of a changing attitude toward childhood, but he still survives in Mother Goose or young children's poetry collections with such verses as:

Let dogs delight to bark and bite  
For God has made them so:  
Let bears and lions growl and fight,  
For 'tis their nature to.

But, children, you should never let  
Such angry quarrels arise,  
Your little hands were never made  
To tear each other's eyes.

The lesson always survives in children's literature; the violence of "awful warning" is less searing in Mother Goose than in much well-intentioned religious or moral literature, or than in some of the explicitly realistic material presented to young people today.

Violence in Mother Goose can be explained from the context in history, and the violence is perpetuated by the insistence, stemming from oral tradition, on a standard repetition. The nursery rhymes can be used to infer social history and the presence of violence in past times. One example is the phenomenon of child abuse and infanticide that may underlie such rhymes as "Rock-a-bye Baby".<sup>11</sup>

It is an accepted psychological fact that, through fantasy, a human being reveals that which is most important to him. Furthermore, some of the burden of the reality is removed through exercise of the fantasy. Unwanted children have been born to a life of abuse, misery, and beating. The matter of child abuse in our present society is a hidden but pervasive and persistent evil.<sup>12</sup> Child abusers vent their spleen in Mother Goose's society. At least one psychologist has asserted that "Rock-a-bye Baby" allows a parent to express concealed hostility toward a child – the wish of a mother to be rid of a burdensome child has found its way into cradle song.<sup>13</sup> Has it also found its way into one of the most delightful longer poems of Mother Goose?

Gay go up and gay go down  
To ring the bells of London town.

This is normally read to children just above the age of infancy; it is an introduction to longer poetry requiring sustained listening. It introduces onomatopoeia, a device used throughout the easy rhyming couplets. The young child may be lulled by the rhythm and may become drowsy and inattentive before the end of this rhyme. When the child droops, the swooping last couplet comes to affright his rest:

Here comes a candle to light you to bed  
Here comes a chopper to chop off your head!

The thought of infanticide, too unpleasant to acknowledge openly, has been expressed in nursery play. David Bakan contends that "Rock-a-bye Baby" takes advantage of the fact that the child does not understand the words. The effect is one of cursing a person in an unknown language.<sup>14</sup> The curse releases an emotion or tension without actually harming the person cursed. However, children can still sense the hostility and malevolent intent, and Bakan advances the hypothesis that they erect defensive barriers against too explicit an expression of this intent. One of these barriers is the insistence on stories or rhymes being repeated in the same way at each telling. Children thus refuse to have a situation clarified through the use of alternate wording or explanation. They hold the truth at bay, defending themselves by the magic of formula. The hypothesis may hold elements of truth – young children certainly do prefer their stories recited according to the familiar version.

Psychologists assert that children are reassured by ritual; at a certain stage of their development they prefer things in ordered patterns. This order may be in the line-up of their toys, or in their routine before going to bed, or in their stories. They are creating an order in their world, a necessary step to future psychological development, and are not necessarily demonstrating a defence mechanism against projected hostility. Literary historians would suggest that renderings from formula derive from an oral tradition. Children are natural inheritors of the tenets of this tradition, and so prefer their stories told in the same way. A simple explanation may be that children appreciate a pattern in tellings so that they may have the assurance of enjoying the same experience twice.

Returning to the abuse of children as revealed in Mother Goose, it may be fairly stated that whippings and beatings are frequent occurrences. Sometimes these beatings are intended as lessons, viewed as legitimate punishment:

Tom, Tom the piper's son  
Stole a pig and away he run.  
The pig was eat and Tom was beat,  
And Tom went crying down the street.

More often the beating is a completely casual occurrence. The old woman who lived in a shoe daily whipped her children soundly. She had so many children, but no old man, and she lived in a confined space, with broth for supper but no bread – a situation conducive to abuse. As the rhyme says, she didn't know what else to do. As it was beyond her ability to cope with her domestic situation, she beat her children – a situation as common in the times of Mother Goose as in present society.

Dr. Faustus, the schoolmaster, whipped his pupils through England, France, and Spain, and back again. One must assume, no other explanation being given,

that the pupils were whipped simply because that was normal procedure in schools.<sup>15</sup>

Little Polly Flinders was whipped for soiling her nice new clothes. In earlier versions of this same verse, Jenny Flinders is whipped for spoiling her clothes. The soiling of nice new clothes, the later refinement, seems advanced to legitimize the beating, new clothes presumably being more worthy of careful treatment. Does a young child grasp the distinction? Quite probably Polly (or Jenny) sat yesterday among those ashes without incurring wrath. Today, for the same action, she has been beaten. It may be that the older version more exactly reveals a truth of childhood, the experience of a sudden inexplicable rage of a parent – an experience common to children who exasperate mothers.

Children often experience vicissitudes of an irrational and violent nature. They accept this allotment. Being defenceless, they have no recourse but to do so. Being innocent, they have no framework for knowing the rational. Their innocence at least functions as a psychological defence against the hostility expressed in some of the words addressed to them. At the same time, this expression of hostility and the depiction of overt violence in nursery rhyme and story informs their innocence. Efforts to change Mother Goose and to reform her cruelties are largely unsuccessful. In *New Nursery Rhymes for Old* (True Aim, 1959), there is a refurbished "Pussy in the Well" on the grounds that this rhyme was particularly indefensible and encouraged children to drown cats. The new version reads:

Ding dong bell  
Pussy's at the well  
Who took her there?  
Little Johnny Hare.  
Who'll bring her in?  
Little Tommy Thin.  
What a jolly boy was that  
To get some milk for pussy cat  
Who ne'er did any harm  
But played with the mice in  
His father's barn.

Even Pussy is reformed in the last lines. However, most children continue to hear the original version with:

...  
What a naughty boy was that  
To drown poor pussy cat  
Who ne'er did any harm  
But killed the mice in  
His father's barn.

Mothers recite to their children the verses they recall from their own nursery days; hence, the verses survive in the same form. The words are not analyzed, they are simply received as the magical right words from long ago.

Mother Goose does change, but slowly. Items gradually drop because they no longer have a place and have not firmly entrenched themselves in folk tradition.

English children were once threatened with Bonaparte; Old Boney was a tall dark man who rode his horse to snatch naughty children, tear them limb from limb, and gobble them up. Old Boney, or Giant Bonaparte as he is sometimes called, no longer has the same force as a threat in nurseries. Clearly, at one time he was an historical threat to Englishmen, and that legacy would have echoed in the adult uses of the rhyme. Now he exists as a powerless bogeyman from a dim past, and is only represented in omnibus collections.

It is probably not possible or necessary to expurgate the violence in Mother Goose. Such a body of literature should not be defended on the grounds that it is no worse than many another, but it is true that nursery rhymes are no worse in their violent content than many an other literary genres for children – for example, folk and fairy tales. Nursery rhymes are much better than some examples of children's literature, such as comic books and their visual equivalents, filmed cartoons, which tend to exploit violence for the sake of entertainment.

It is not realistic to ignore violence; children meet it as early as they meet their nursery rhymes. But violence in nursery rhymes need not be emphasized; its presence is not unduly intrusive. It might be argued that life may be made, not better – never that – but bearable by the revelation of aggression and violence as a natural human reaction. Mother Goose, violent as it sometimes is, contributes in a traditional form to the development and growth of a child. Mother Goose is a sturdy pabulum, expanding a child's vocabulary, introducing a wide range of characters, and training a child's ear to the musical cadence of language. It has frequently been said that Mother Goose frees a child's imagination, charming the ear and delighting the inward eye. It is advisable to take what Mother Goose offers without insisting on reform. She is redoubtable and will not readily recant her traditional ways.

## Chapter Five

# Folk and Fairy Tales

Folk and fairy tales, like nursery rhymes, have survived condemnation and alteration to hold a secure place as part of the first literature for young children. Fairy tales may be defined as stories wherein the little people help or hinder the protagonists; folk tales may be defined as those which include the supernatural, along with fragmentary history or bits of wisdom. The values of these tales for children are many; they are not solely for entertainment, as thought Mrs. Sarah Trimmer, editor of *The Guardian of Education*. In the early 1800s, she wrote that such books are “calculated to entertain the imagination, rather than to improve the heart, or cultivate the understanding.”<sup>1</sup> In this century, which has almost totally accepted the value of entertainment, particularly in relation to education, the two last phrases are still contended. Some say that fairy tales do improve the heart and cultivate the understanding, if those phrases mean that the child matures into an integrated personality, exhibiting ideal characteristics such as tolerance, rational behaviour, respect for self and others. Others claim that fairy and folk tales – full as they are of magic tricks, cheating and falsehoods, unearned rewards, unpunished evils, lazy boys and greedy girls – do not, at best, advance the ideal development of personality. The stories distort reality and, at worst, frighten or emotionally scar children by their violence. The violence is both physical and psychological and may be projected against the protagonist with whom the young readers identify.

Almost as soon as printing began, these stories were taken from the oral tradition and recorded. There are Italian and French texts of fairy tales from the late 1500s, but the book that immortalized them in written tradition was Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé* (1697).<sup>2</sup> This book also introduced the term Mother Goose into widespread use. “Little Red Riding Hood”, “Sleeping Beauty”, “Bluebeard” and “Cinderella” appeared, cast in literary form.<sup>3</sup> All are worthy of examination as universal tales containing symbols of power and violence. Perrault writes clearly and simply, giving each tale a complete setting. Children aged seven to nine, reading alone, often find Perrault's tales easier to read than the tales of Andersen

or the Grimm brothers. Except, claims Elizabeth Cook in *The Ordinary and the Fabulous*, Perrault's “Red Riding Hood”, which is “peculiarly nursery-ish in manner and peculiarly savage in content, even if one doesn't suspect it of imaging sadism or originating in ritual murder.”<sup>4</sup>

The story does create the image of sadism and does originate in murder, ritual or otherwise. Without symbolism or literary device, the story tells of a young girl, walking alone through an uninhabited wood on an errand, who meets a wolf who acts like a man. This wolfman questions the girl about herself and leaves. The girl hurries on to her destination, and with happy relief arrives at the sanctuary of her grandmother's house. Trapped within the house, she gradually learns of her grandmother's murder by the stranger to whom she spoke in the wood. The man's sadistic teasing over, the child is raped. Why else undress and get into bed with the wolf? She is killed and mutilated in cannibalistic fashion. Perrault's original audience, the French upper classes of the late 1600s were probably quite aware of the implicit horror, sexual assault, and cannibalism in the story. These elements would likely be heightened by the time of history in which the audience lived: some of the factual incidents of Perrault's time are more horrible than the fictions. The wolfman that Red Riding Hood met was not, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the totally fictional character that the “big bad wolf” is today.

The wolf was a dreaded predatory animal of north-central Europe, sheltered in the forested lands. In England, the wolf was exterminated quite early, and hence no tradition of werewolf stories grew. But in Europe, the werewolf was accepted because seeming proofs existed in the persons of wolfmen. Lycanthropy, a form of insanity in which men behaved like fictional werewolves, was an aspect of the general obsession with witchcraft and devil-mania that swept Europe in the middle ages. On limited evidence there seems no indication that women ever suffered from or were persecuted for lycanthropy. The syndrome, associated with sexual violence and necrophilia, was recorded in males only.

Peter Stubbe (or Stumpf) was a man who murdered, sexually assaulted, and mutilated 15 young persons. It is claimed that he tortured animals when humans were denied him. It is also claimed that he butchered his victims in order to eat parts of them – including the brains of his own young son, whose skull he battered. Although he had mistresses, he apparently committed incest with his daughter. When apprehended, returning from a graveyard, he claimed that he was a wolf. In those days, the claim was considered as a verity and not treated as an expression of insanity.

Pierre DeLancre, a magistrate under Henry IV of France, wrote an account of another celebrated wolf-man case, that of Jean Grenier. Grenier inspired ballads and pamphlets, and his horrible excesses were described in the street literature of the early 1600s. Fearing torture, Grenier, when arrested, confessed immediately and was sentenced in 1589:

...to be broken on a wheel, with red-hot burning pincers in several places to have the flesh pulled off his bones, after that, his legs and arms to be broken with a wooden axe or hatchet, afterwards to have his head struck from his body, then to have his carcase burnt to ashes.

The good servant DeLancre reported the case in his *Description of the Inconstancy of Evil Angels* (1612), in which he documented his modest successes in burning 600 witches. The actions of persons both within and without the pale of society were so horrendous in the seventeenth century that some of the fictional accounts deriving from the time are but pale reflections of the facts.

Children in such times would likely have seen public violence, and an audience hearing “Red Riding Hood” would have been attuned to the symbolism. Its impact has considerably diminished today. The symbol of the wolf, standing for the violence of sexual depravity and for a force of evil, has lost the power to horrify or to titillate. The illustrations in today’s versions often show wolves either as big dogs or as exaggerated Disney cartoons. The moral of tale – in Perrault’s time, as now – is, “Little girls, don’t talk to strangers.” Few little girls expect to meet wolves in the woods nowadays, so the story remains securely imaginative. Furthermore, the violence of the ending is diluted by the ritual conversation between wolf and child:

Grandmama, what great arms you have got!  
The better to embrace thee, my pretty child.

Grandmama, what great legs you have got!  
The better to run with, my pretty child.

Grandmama, what great ears you have got!  
The better to hear with, my pretty child.

Grandmama, what great teeth you have got!  
The better to eat you with, my pretty child.

Upon saying this, the wolf fell upon Red Riding Hood and ate her! Some versions end here, while others tell of nearby huntsmen or woodsmen who come to the hut and avenge the murder of Red Riding Hood by killing

the wolf – a just ending to children, and therefore a happy outcome of sorts. In some versions, the woodsmen split the wolf’s belly, releasing the girl unharmed. This release, together with the symbolism of the red cloak and hood, is part of the evidence for the origin of this tale . . . not in folk history or experience, but in allegorical nature myths of death and rebirth. The forces of light and innocence, symbolized by the happy and bright child, are met on their journey by the forces of darkness and evil, personified by the wolf, who in medieval thought and in northern mythology is the destroyer of light.

The sexual symbolism and the fears of deception, destruction, and invasion of home and person in the various versions of “Red Riding Hood” are discussed at some length in an article by Lee Burns.<sup>5</sup> He points out that “Little Golden Hood” follows more closely the death/rebirth cycle, and that golden is the colour of the sun, light, and goodness. Red is more often the symbol of sexual desire and sexual maturity, as well as of blood and violent anger. It seems plausible to accept “Red Riding Hood” as a story of sexual violence, although children cannot realize this overtone.

Educational authorities in Ontario were only marginally aware of this connotation when they included the story in school readers. The authorities wanted the story in their readers, but they also wanted to spare children thoughts of death. The version of “Red Riding Hood” in *The Ontario Readers*, at one time authorized for use in Ontario public schools, is attributed to Perrault.<sup>6</sup> But it was thought more suitable to have the wolf invite Red Riding Hood to help him arise from the bed, where he has been hiding under the covers. Just as he is about to eat the little girl, a wasp flies in the window and stings him. “The wolf gave a cry and a little bird outside sang ‘Tweet! Tweet!’ This told the huntsman it was time to let fly his arrow, and the wolf was killed on the spot.”

“Little Red Riding Hood” does not seem to be a tale that has frightened many children. Perhaps the fate of the heroine is overlooked in the rhythmical climax. There is conflicting evidence about children’s reactions to physical assaults and insults in their first stories. In group story-telling sessions, most children seem excited, anticipatory, and unworried by the violence. If queried as to the effect of the story, they will robustly state that the stories “didn’t scare me”, or give reassurance that the stories are “only make-believe”.<sup>7</sup> Evidence of these tales frightening children tends to be based upon individual cases; some children have reacted with fear and night-time terror to stories such as “Hansel and Gretel” or “Babes in the Wood”. These tales have great power to frighten sensitive children, because the protagonists are human beings, not anthropomorphic characters as in “The Three Little Pigs” or mixtures of human beings and talking animals as in “Little Red Riding Hood”.

Unlike Red Riding Hood, who is an innocent and

simple child with a loving family, Hansel and Gretel are unwanted children who display ingenuity and boldness of spirit. This tale, collected by folklorists Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, is an example of the genre of tales in which small children outwit a witch or ogre into whose hands they have fallen.

The plight of abandoned children is a familiar motif and "Hansel and Gretel" is a good example. Hansel overhears their father and stepmother planning to abandon them in the woods, and he arms himself with pebbles to blaze a trail back home. Initially the parents are relieved, but when poverty again pinches, the children are once more abandoned; Hansel lays a trail of breadcrumbs but the birds eat the crumbs and the children are truly lost. At the moment of despair, they arrive at the gingerbread house and, tempted by sweet foods, are imprisoned by the occupant. Hansel is fattened to become the witch's dinner, while Gretel is the abused servant. Clever Hansel delays his death with trickery as long as possible and quick-witted Gretel, on the day appointed, manages to shove the witch into the flaming oven. A magic duck helps the children find their way home. Fortunately, the cruel stepmother has died. The children, with the witch's treasure that they thoughtfully stole, are able to end the family's sorrows forever.

Abandonment, or being lost, is a strong childhood fear. In this story the fear is explored; the children emerge victorious, able to solve not only their own dilemma but also that of their family. The tale is rather more psychologically than physically frightening, for although the oven is always described as burning hot with fierce flames, there is no emphasis on physical abuse. Some children may feel threatened and frightened by the tale, but then reassured by the outcome. Tales like this one can be reassuring, allowing a child to imagine abandonment, but holding a bad outcome at bay by use of satisfactory dénouement, and by setting the tale in "Once upon a time." When tales are told in an atmosphere of affection, the fantastic elements are appreciated and the action is made safely distant by both time and place. Jella Lepman, working for UNESCO after the war, reported that when a large exhibition of children's books was shown in Munich as a contribution to rebuilding a divided world, "Hansel and Gretel" was not regarded as an appropriate tale because, for some adults and war-scarred children, the fantasy was too close to recent reality. The witch's oven too much resembled the gas chambers of Auschwitz, and the effect of a "distancing factor" was temporarily broken.<sup>8</sup>

"Hansel and Gretel" is a more positive tale than those which end with death for the child. In this respect, "Little Red Riding Hood", beneath its veneer, is a depressing and savage tale. So too, is the story of "Babes in the Wood", a tale of long standing that has fascinated or frightened children for many generations. Known versions of this ballad may be traced back to

1595. The tale has been in constant appearance ever since, sometimes as a chapbook – a cheaply produced booklet sold by itinerant pedlars – sometimes as a ballad or nursery rhyme. Two versions are in print today, the most readable being *The Old Ballad of Babes in the Wood* (Bodley Head, 1972), illustrated by Edward Ardizzone and based on a 1640 text in the British Museum.

The story is a simple one; a little boy and his young sister, taken to a wood to be murdered by hired ruffians, are instead abandoned.

Thus wandered these two babes  
Till Death did end their grief.  
In one another's arms they died,  
As Babes wanting relief.

No burial these pretty babes  
Of any man receives,  
Till Robin Redbreast painfully  
Did cover them with leaves.

In spite of its long publishing history, which does indicate popularity, there is disagreement about the suitability of the story. The good Mrs. Trimmer (1741-1810) read and apparently enjoyed "Babes in the Wood" when she was young, but in mature judgment she "condemned the work unreservedly as being absolutely unfit for the perusal of children."<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Cooke is now of the same mind. In her introduction to myths, legends, and fairy tales for teachers and storytellers, she states that "Hansel and Gretel" and "Babes in the Wood" should be absolutely banned.<sup>10</sup> Her reason is that no psychological distance is possible when the fictional children and the listening children are of the same age. The identification factor is too strong.

Many children's librarians would agree, and would not recommend "Babes in the Wood", both because of its subject and the treatment of its subject. Kathleen Lines does not agree:

...the verdicts are wrong. Children, in my experience, do not find the story frightening but rather look on it as vaguely sad. They love Robin Redbreast, and it is his long work, fetching leaf by leaf in his beak to make a covering for the Babes, that they remember, and keep as a lasting picture in the mind's eye.<sup>11</sup>

When this attitude prevails, it is because the child's interest is shifted to the action of the robin, just as the recitation at the end of "Red Riding Hood" is diversionary. Children are also protected by their innocence; they have no concept of personal mortality. Overall, "Babes in the Woods" appears to have little contemporary appeal and, as it has few redeeming factors, it may be just as well if this tale retreats into the province of scholars.<sup>12</sup>

"Babes in the Wood", "Hansel and Gretel", and "Little Red Riding Hood" are about young children; it is more usual for the fairy and folk tales to be concerned with the fate of young adults. Thus, the children enjoying the stories have the distance from

personal identification increased by age difference as well as by differences of time and place. The protagonists are young princesses or princes, girls and boys of marriageable age. The stories are frequently about their transition into rightful adult inheritance as kings or queens or, at the very least, as rulers of their own personal fate.

While young children in fairy tales are not always helpless – Hansel and Gretel save themselves – many of the adolescents need to depend on magic or the advice and help of supernatural beings. None the less, unlike Hansel and Gretel whose dearest wish was to return home, the maidens and youths are anxious to venture forth into the wider world. They confidently expect, somehow, to prove themselves. Both Jack the Giant-killer and Jack-in-the-Beanstalk are eager to win fame and fortune by whatever means comes to hand – treachery, violence, supernatural aid. The “History of Jack the Giant-killer” was first published in chapbook editions in the 1700s, and all manner of children and adults were entertained by his bloody exploits. The Fieldings – Henry and his sister Sarah, who expressed her literary talent in literature for children – as well as Samuel Johnson and William Cowper, recorded favourable mentions of Jack.<sup>13</sup> Cowper thought this a story in which native humour reigned, often useful and always entertaining.

When “Jack the Giant-killer” has been criticized in the past, it has been on grounds of production or style, or because stories were held in certain times to be unprofitable rubbish. Few critics have been distressed with the physical violence throughout the tale. Stupid man-eating giants are tricked by Jack and dispatched with pick-axe, knife, or Jack’s magical sword of sharpness. Finally he meets his last giant, who cries aloud in the traditional manner:

Fee Fi Fau Fum  
I smell the blood of an Englishman!  
Be he alive or be he dead,  
I'll grind his bones  
To make my bread.

The formula is common to British tales of cannibalistic giants.<sup>14</sup> Jack wins over a series of giants, each more terrible than the last, until he frees a kingdom, becomes a knight of King Arthur’s Round Table, marries a Duke’s beautiful daughter, wins a fortune, and lives happily ever after. The numerous killings have little reality; they are hurdles to be overcome on Jack’s road to his adult inheritance. Since the giants represent evil, Jack may also be viewed as working for the good of society in defeating them. This is explicit when he frees people from a giant’s bondage. The violence is held within an imaginary framework and there would be little purpose served in censoring “Jack the Giant-killer” or other tales like it on the grounds of violence.

Fairy and folk tales are the first stories children encounter about growing up and passing successfully through the difficult trials of maturation. The trials are

often physical, as when giants are slain or impossible tasks are accomplished. The trials also involve the control of strong emotions, as revealed in violent incidents or fantasies that arise from thoughts of rage, hate, and revenge. Stepmothers uniformly appear as wicked women in fairy tales.<sup>15</sup> A stepmother is frequently the cause of the protagonist’s plight. Cinderella’s jealous and demanding stepmother, who promotes and favours her own daughters, is universally known. It was the stepmother in “Hansel and Gretel” who urged the abandonment of the children and whose removal was necessary to the happiness of the family unit. The stepmother in “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” rids herself of Snow White because of the sexual rivalry that her stepdaughter represents. As stepmothers must always be removed, she dies at the conclusion of the story. In some versions the wicked queen simply chokes to death on her own thwarted rage; in other versions, less concerned with a literary nemesis and more concerned with a vengeful justice, she is forced at the wedding-feast to dance in slippers of red-hot iron until she drops dead.

The heroines in fairy and folk tales witness violent acts and even give silent approval. Snow White was not as forgiving as Cinderella in the treatment of her step-relatives. The heroines, however, are not aggressive and do not engage in acts of deadly assault. There is the odd exception, as when Gretel (manfully) seizes the opportunity to push the witch into the oven. Maidens are always modest and passive as they enter their inheritance of marriage, even though the stories can still feature bloody violence.

“Blue Beard”, recounted by Perrault and generations since, tells of the young woman who marries a fearsome blue-bearded man. The man is terrifying, both because of his physical appearance and because he has been married to several wives who have disappeared. No matter, the girl’s life is filled with fine dresses, jewels, and delightful pleasantries. Forbidden to her is a single room in the house. Her curiosity overcomes her promise not to enter the room. When, in fear and trembling, she unlocks the door, she finds a room with walls clothed in blood and the corpses of murdered wives ranged against the walls. As the blood will not wash from the key, her act is discovered and she is condemned to join the other wives. Suspense in the story is built as she begs time to pray and sends her sister, Anne, to look for her brothers who have promised to visit. At the very moment when Blue Beard has grasped her by her long flowing hair and is about to cut off her head with his cutlass, the brothers arrive and run Blue Beard through with their swords. Blue Beard’s fortune goes to the lady, who shortly makes a happy second marriage.

The legend of “Blue Beard” has been attributed to many sources. The most common derives from the factual accounts of Gilles de Rais (1404-1440), a Marshal of France who distinguished himself on the

battlefield as a companion of Joan of Arc. He also distinguished himself, even for medieval times, as an appalling torturer and sexual murderer of children and young people. Finally, when his position no longer could protect his excesses, he confessed and was burned alive near Nantes. There is little historic fact known, but there is enough to give some credence to the possible reflection of de Rais in "Blue Beard".

Tales of the "Blue Beard" genre are widespread. A German version collected by the Brothers Grimm is "The Robber Bridegroom"; and the English equivalent, "Mr. Fox", was current in the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> The tale is short, and easily told, and has a strong rhythmical sense that delights children who hear it now, and who sit entranced as the suspenseful story unravels. The Lady Mary decides to marry the rich, gallant, and mysterious Mr. Fox. Before the wedding, Lady Mary visits her future home and sees above the gate a sign which says:

BE BOLD, BE BOLD

Further along, above a doorway, is another sign:

BE BOLD, BE BOLD, BUT NOT TOO BOLD

and then:

BE BOLD, BE BOLD, BUT NOT TOO BOLD

LEST THAT YOUR HEART'S BLOOD SHOULD RUN COLD

Lady Mary discovers the blood-stained bodies and skeletons of beautiful young brides and surmises her fate. Just then, Mr. Fox approaches with yet another victim. Quickly, Lady Mary hides. Mr. Fox espies a diamond on the hand of the dead woman and tries to pull it off. When it will not come, he curses and swears. He draws his sword, raises it, and brings it down upon the poor lady's hand. The sword cuts off the hand, which flies into the air, and falls – of all places – in the Lady Mary's lap. The next morning, which is supposed to be the wedding day, Lady Mary tells Mr. Fox of her visit to the bloody chamber, as if it were a dream. At each stage of the telling, Mr. Fox says, "It is not so, nor it was not so, and God forbid it should be so!" At the crucial moment, the Lady Mary cries out in turn, "But it is so, and it was so, here's hand and ring I have to show." She pulls the severed hand from her dress, and points it straight at Mr. Fox. At once, her brothers draw their swords and cut Mr. Fox into a thousand pieces.

In "Blue Beard" and "Mr. Fox", there is the motif of the one prohibition. One act, one question is forbidden, all else allowed. It was so in the Garden of Eden. It was so in the story of Pandora's box in Greek mythology. Whatever the anthropological or psychological explanation of this universal motif of one taboo, it is clear that an awful punishment must follow its breaking. Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden, but that is unlikely to be a satisfactory punishment from the child's viewpoint. Pandora, the first woman, allowed all ills except hope to escape and to henceforth be visited upon

mankind. Again, children are unlikely to appreciate the visitation of vague ills as a terrible punishment, and they are much too naive to ponder the presence of hope in a box of ills. Intellectually, children only appreciate physical violence as horrifying. What lies behind the closed door must be as awful, as bloody, as their imagining can conceive, so mutilated and multiple corpses seem appropriate. Retribution upon the evil-doer must be in similar measure, so Mr. Fox is not simply killed but is hacked into a thousand pieces. The violence in many of these tales is extravagant speech and little more.

Many tales telling an essentially simple story – adventure in a strange place, defeat of an enemy, triumph over an obstacle, and so on – have roots in history or social anthropology that explain their violence. By and large, the tales are unlikely to frighten, and their most usual function is to entertain. Bruno Bettelheim, among others, has asserted that a number of these tales and the violence in them are positively helpful to the psyche.<sup>17</sup> He follows Max Lüthi and others in asserting that fairy tales are important to a child's psychological growth.<sup>18</sup>

Bettelheim asserts that a central problem for a child is ascertaining the meaning in his life and extending that meaning to life in general. Initially, parents give the necessary help. Then the cultural heritage, which reaches the child through first stories, aids in the task. Enrichment comes from the stories if they stimulate imagination, develop the intellect, and satisfy emotions. The stories must reflect the aspirations and anxieties of a child, and fairy and folk tales are marvelously attuned to the conscious and subconscious thoughts of childhood. Fairy tales suggest solutions and resolutions to problems, albeit often violent ones.

The solutions that children might pose for themselves are very often violent. Children at the fairy-tale age can feel emotion intensely.<sup>19</sup> They are learning moderation and rationalization as means of conducting their affairs. Their fear, their anger, and their hate are emphatic and extreme in response to situations that touch them, and so it appears only just to a child that rewards be liberal and punishment severe. Each person should be accorded his share in reward or punishment. G.K. Chesterton is frequently paraphrased on this point. He once remarked that children are innocent and love justice, while adults are wicked and prefer mercy.

Violence operates as justice in fairy tales. It is a suitable conclusion to tales of intrigue and magic deeds; it affirms to a child's intellectual and emotional satisfaction the fact that evil-doers will be punished and that the hero or heroine will be rewarded. The hero or heroine is always deserving from a child's point of view, although not always virtuous from an adult's point of view. This lack of virtue, in an adult's eyes, usually focuses on the failure of the central character to be dedicated, hard-working, or honest. Some critics of fairy tales see this lack of virtue as a detrimental aspect of the

stories; the central characters often gain large rewards by guile and without toil. On the other hand, to blunt the criticism, it would appear that both hope and comfort are offered to the undeserving in fairy tales. In numerous tales, the stupid and unwanted child (or adolescent) succeeds in winning the prize. Realistic tales are frequently less charitable or more contrived in introducing a mechanism that turns the undesirable person into someone altered, new and deserving. The realistic tale often has a pragmatic basis that is of little psychological value to the disturbed child. There are children for whom attitude and effort – the *praxis* underlying many realistic or simple anthropomorphic tales – do not accomplish a goal. Fairy tales accept the notion that luck or magic can help in accomplishing the goal.

“Happily ever after” may come about if all one contributes is hope and a willingness to carry on. “Rumpelstiltskin” a common English variant on “Tom Tit Tot”, is a story of greed, hope, and happy ending. A somewhat feckless maiden becomes the bride of a greedy king because of her reputed ability to spin straw into gold. She enjoys her honeymoon as queen, but must bargain with an ugly gnome to get the spinning done. She promises either herself or her first-born child. She may redeem her promise if she can guess the little man’s name. Luck rescues her, and she is able to name the little man and continue on in her unearned position as queen. She is a hopeful person and her optimism is rewarded. The little man stamps with rage and dashes his foot and leg deep into the floor. In his fearsome rage, he then pulls at his leg so fiercely that he tears himself in two. Rumpelstiltskin’s self-destructive act is extravagant but appropriate if the symbolism of the power of names is appreciated.<sup>20</sup> The greedy queen reverses the balance of power between the dwarf and herself. She frees herself from obligation, and indeed demonstrates a power over the dwarf. The children identify with the young queen and they learn to hope for happy outcome.

The tapestry of fairy and folk tale is woven of many layered strands, violence being but one strong thread. Violence is present as retribution, as extravagant speech, and as awesome consequence of breaking a formidable taboo. It would be neither possible nor useful to pull the thread of violence away from the weave of fairy and folk tale. Violence is securely held within the fabric and is an integral part of the design.

## Chapter Six

### Illustration

Illustration plays a major part in children's literature. Much critical evaluation is directed toward the art and the artist. Illustrators become as well-known as the authors who write for children, particularly when they illustrate anonymous folk or fairy tales. Pictures help young readers to visualize characters and to understand the action of stories and poems. A child's first picture-book may well be a story told without the help of text. Such illustration must be graphic in order to clearly present the story. Cartoons or sketches which exaggerate qualities succeed in doing this pictographic presentation very well.

Walt Disney has built an industry on this cartoon exaggeration. This industry has both champions and critics. Certainly, because of their exposure to a Disney world in other media, young children rapidly learn to identify Disney productions, and they want to buy and to read Disney products.<sup>1</sup> His champions applaud the family or nature-centred stories; his fare is decent, healthy, sanitary, and always has a happy ending. His detractors point out that he oversimplifies nature, often for a sentimental end.<sup>2</sup> Critics of his presentation of creative literature feel that he mutilates folk and fairy tale, disregarding anthropological, psychological, or spiritual truths.<sup>3</sup> Critics of his style of illustration assert that he both stereotypes and grossly exaggerates. He frequently uses garish pictures in which all princesses are blonde sex symbols, all princes gorgeous young men, and all evil persons overdrawn. Stepsisters and stepmothers are misshapen and ugly; evil queens appear like comic book dragon-ladies, with black upswept hair, pointed eyebrows, and glaring eyes. The big, black wolf has slavering grinning jaws and cannot be mistaken for anyone's Grandmother. Children respond to these illustrations immediately with an indrawn breath of suspense, released in giggles or screams. The critics point out that children constantly reacting to these overdrawn characters never realize nuance, nor develop sensitivity, and are gradually prepared only to expect or to accept exaggeration in illustration or in incident as they grow older.

The way thus is paved for the constant comic-book situation; this is discussed at length in Fredric

Wertham's *Seduction of Innocent* (Rinehart, 1954).

Wertham, a psychiatrist, documented his opinion on the effects of comic books on the minds and behaviour of children. He specifically examined crime comics in an era, the 1950s, when the incidence and illustration of violence, latent pornography, sadism, and cruelty in comic books were being discussed in government commissions and parent/teacher groups.<sup>4</sup> *Der Struwwelpeter* a children's book of horrors (though none quite as graphic in torture as crime comics) put on a spurt of sales in 1955 when crime comics were being debated in the British Parliament. *Der Struwwelpeter* – in translation, *Shockheaded or Slovenly Peter* – published in



*The English Struwwelpeter or Pretty Stories and Funny Pictures for Little Children*,  
by Heinrich Hoffmann, c. 1860

English in 1948, was written by a Frankfurt doctor, Heinrich Hoffmann, to entertain his own children and young patients. The book contained nonsense verses and drawings about children with enormously bad habits and very rude manners. It is a book of "awful warning", not meant to be taken seriously. Indeed, for its time at least, it was more lively and more entertaining than the dull moralistic children's books characteristic of the mid-nineteenth century. Parents who introduce *Struwwelpeter* to their children today report that one child may shrug away the stories while another will be very frightened by the great long, red-legged scissor-man who cuts off thumbs and leaves poor Conrad crippled, his bleeding hands hanging limply by his sides. Three of the universally known German books for children have been criticized for the cruelties they contain - Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*, Wilhelm Busch's *Max und Moritz* (1865), and Grimm's *Marchen*. Neither Busch (1832-1908), who produced satirical illustrated verse for *Fliegende Blatter*, nor Hoffmann (1809-1894) were concerned to modify their art for children's viewing. Hoffmann is said to have checked the woodcuts or lithographs from his sketches to ensure that "nothing pretty-pretty" was admitted.<sup>5</sup>



*Max und Moritz*, by Wilhelm Busch, c. 1865

The influence of German illustration can be traced in modern illustrators like Maurice Sendak (1928- ) or Tomi Ungerer (1931- ). George Cruikshank (1792-1878), illustrator of Dickens, supplied the 22 full-page engravings for the first English edition of Grimm's tales, *German Popular Stories*, issued in 1823-26. Cruickshank also did not tailor his art to an audience of children, although it is true that most widely known illustrators of Grimm's have not emphasized the horrific aspects of the tales. The actual function of much of children's illustration, then, has been to clarify, by visual presentation, elements within the stories. When these elements are horrific, violent, or cruel, the illustrations may either increase or decrease the effect. The pictures may soothe the ugliness in a text or divert attention from it by drawing visual attention to some other item, such as fanciful characters or the environs of the tale. The picture may exaggerate the horror for a sensitive child by making visually graphic that which his imagination could not conceive. This is unfortunate, but it is largely unpredictable because the reactions of children are so individual. Catherine Storr, a children's author, tells about one of her children who was frightened by both a tale and an illustration in one of Andrew Lang's coloured fairy books. The child fearfully thought of the story as the "hatchet picture you mustn't let me see".<sup>6</sup>

Some purists think that fairy and folk tale in particular ought not to be illustrated, but simply told. The telling creates its own imaginary landscape painted by the child. A child may create a not-too-fearful witch or ogre, or a wolf that is large, but not unmanageably so. A child can usually cope with personal imaginings, but may not be able to assimilate pictorial horrors created by someone else. Nightmares and nasty memories are the results.

However, it is now taken for granted that children's books will be illustrated; the younger the child the book is written for, the greater the amount of illustration. The illustrated text, whether for children or adults, has a long history - as long as printing itself. The first books had pictures that were crude in content and in execution. They undoubtedly frightened some children and delighted others.

Until recent times adults do not seem to have worried about violence in the illustrations. Jack the Giant-killer has always been shown at a crucial moment, pick-axe at the ready, about to dispose of a giant. The giant is also usually shown, stupidly slitting his own belly open, fooled into doing so by Jack's example of pretending to slit his own stomach (giants and ogres in British lore are usually stupid). The chapbooks containing the Jack tales and similar stories of conquest are like early comic books, the pictures supporting and advancing the story. The reading of these chapbooks was widespread among children and adults of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries.

These books of former times tend to reflect an attitude that condoned frightening children for the



Jack the Giant-killer chapbook, c. 1830

purpose of subduing them to the useful and the good. The Georgians and the Victorians were not squeamish about putting physical or mental violence into books for children. A message, graphically presented in text and illustration, was meant to warn, to lift one's thoughts to heaven, as in the martyrology of John Foxe. Still in print today, editions or abridgements of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* were surely perused for gruesome illustrations. The pictures in nineteenth-century editions were more violent than in the original sixteenth-century conception. Illustrations exaggerate the text. Illustration can also be used to ameliorate the text by increasing the distance between the reader and the story.

Both versions of the historical tale "*Babes in the Wood*" in print today show the young children dressed in the fashions of a hundred or more years before they were published. Caldecott (1879) showed his characters in Shakespearian costume (tinted Victorian black for mourning) while Ardizzone (1971) showed his children in Dickensian period costumes. Caldecott showed the dead children in the centre of the last illustration. Ardizzone, with greater delicacy, in his last illustration shows the children, small in a corner, with Robin Redbreast prominent in the foreground.

Ardizzone, interviewed on the subject of his artistic style, suggested that the best effects are achieved through understatement. The minimum of line should suggest the expression or action. "One shouldn't tell the reader too much. The best view of a hero, I always feel, is a back view." Illustrations should leave something for the child to supply. This view is contrary to that of the Disney school of art, where the expected audience reaction is planned to the last detail.<sup>7</sup>

Ardizzone is both author and illustrator, and his books have sometimes been criticized – particularly the "Tim" books – because of themes of unreality and separation. Tim is a little boy of resolute character who, at the early age of five, goes to sea. Tim has dangerous



Illustration by Edward Ardizzone from the Old Ballad of the *Babes in the Wood*

adventures and faces death, shipwreck, and fire. Ardizzone's personal favourite is *Tim All Alone* (Oxford, 1956), which won the British Kate Greenaway Medal in 1956 for the most distinguished contribution to children's book illustration. It is an emotional book in which young Tim arrives home from the sea only to find a sign on his house:

GONE AWAY

HOUSE TO LET

Tim is a stoical little boy, resolutely prepared to undertake a search for a missing parent. Generally, Ardizzone is praised for these sturdy characterizations. Ardizzone's heroines, Lucy and Charlotte, are equally independent and unsentimental. The *Tim* stories recall the healthy outspokenness of nursery rhyme and folk tale; the stories confront the ideas of separation and death that are not far from childhood's consciousness. A child may be helped by following Tim's example of stoicism and perseverance. Ardizzone's illustrations complement and elaborate the text; they do not overwhelm the child.

The modern Tim series recalls Tommy Grimes from English fairy tale and folklore. Evaline Ness's illustrations in *Mr. Miaccia: An English Folk Tale* (Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1967) mitigate the violence in Tommy's story. *Mr. Miaccia* has been censured as frightening, for he is a bogeyman who boils and eats disobedient children whom he catches away from home. Clever Tommy tricks Mr. Miaccia, not once, but twice! Children like the short story because it is suspenseful, and because Tommy is clearly a match for Mr. Miaccia.

The illustrated version lengthens the brief story, without emphasizing the elements of violence and cannibalism.

The use of pages of pictures tends to submerge the baldly stated facts of a short telling and to create a solidly imaginary world as context. The setting is removed into the delightful nursery rhyme hodge-podge of architecture and costume. Tommy is an insouciant Dickensian urchin, and a child can enjoy the story with absolute faith in Tommy's ability to triumph.

Max, in *Where the Wild Things Are* (Harper and Row, 1963) is also, like Tommy, pictured as being in control of the situation. This book, an original story created by author-illustrator Maurice Sendak, drew some unfavorable initial criticism. Max is an unruly little boy who has been banished to his room without supper for acting like a wild thing. There, in dream, he voyages to the land of wild things and back again, to find his supper waiting for him after all. Sendak has said that Max is his favourite creation: the incident is based on personal childhood memory and is a kind of exorcism in that Max controls the nightmare. But, one reviewer asks, are children ever in charge of a nightmare? The book has

... disturbing possibilities for the child who does not need this catharsis. Each child has his own fears and a catharsis is an individual matter. The pictures rate technically very high; some of them are beautiful. How children feel about the whole book remains to be seen.<sup>8</sup>

The book won a Caldecott Medal as a distinguished American picture book in 1964, and has been enormously popular with children who delight to have it presented in classroom story-hours. Another reviewer who said adults would query the book for many reasons also, quite rightly, said that children would accept it eagerly.<sup>9</sup>

Max is anywhere from four to eight years old. He is the aggressor who easily tames the wild things, monsters who are grinning beasts. He becomes their king, puts a golden crown on his head, and prances about as their leader. Sendak thought that unconsciously he was very influenced by King Kong and other monster films. His literary life as a child in New York City was dominated by movies, Walt Disney, and comic books. Sendak was the first American artist to win a Hans Christian Andersen Medal, in 1970; this medal is awarded by the International Board on Books for Young People, for an outstanding contribution to children's literature. In his acceptance speech, and in interviews, he has spoken of the children's books that have influenced his work. Some of these books he claims to have read in a late-blooming childhood. He was, he felt, deeply influenced by the German illustrators like Randolph Caldecott and George Cruickshank. Grimm's tales particularly appealed to Sendak, especially the first English edition illustrated by Cruikshank. He admired *Der Struwwelpeter*:

... graphically, it is one of the most beautiful books in the world. One might complain about the cutting off of fingers, and the choking to death, and being burned alive, and one might

well have a case there – but esthetically, for an artist growing up it was a good book to look at.<sup>10</sup>

Sendak was pleased to illustrate an edition of Grimm's tales a two-volume work called *The Juniper Tree* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974). This work was published as much, if not more, for the adult reader as for the younger reader. The illustrations are identifiably Sendak; not one of his black-and-white drawings is as violent as the stories in this edition. The difficult text primarily reflects an adult's interest in exactitude of retelling rather than a child's interest in adaption of an older folk tale.

In addition to the commonly heard tales of the Grimm brothers, like "Rapunzel", "Hansel and Gretel", and "The Frog King", there are tales like "The Juniper Tree", "Godfather Death", and "Many-Fur" (a tale of incest).

"The Juniper Tree" tells the story of how a stepmother kills her stepson and sets his dead body by the door. She encourages her own daughter to box the boy's ears so that his severed head falls. The child, Ann Marie, is horrified, screams, and runs to her mother who blames her daughter, saying, "Ann Marie what have you done! Keep quiet and nobody will know. It can't be helped, we will make him into a stew." So the mother chops the boy to pieces, stews him and serves him to his father for supper:

My mother she butchered me,  
My father he ate me,  
My sister, little Ann Marie,  
She gathered up the bones of me  
And tied them in a silken cloth  
To lay under the juniper tree.

There follows a long unwinding in which forgiveness comes to Ann Marie and the father and retribution comes to the stepmother – her head is squashed by a millstone. The young boy is miraculously resurrected from the steaming ashes of his stepmother. The family is reunited without the mother and, hands joined in happiness, they go into the house, sit down at table, and eat their supper.

"Godfather Death" tells the story of the poor man with many children who gives his last-born son to Death as godfather, because Death in the end makes all men equal. Death helps his godson to become a famous physician by giving the lad an herb that prolongs life. When the young doctor misuses his gift, Death takes him to an underground place and there shows him the stub of his candle of life. The young man begs his godfather to lengthen his candle, which is burning low. Death agrees, only to drop purposely the new taper and so cause the young man to die.

The task of illustrating such stories appropriately is not an easy one. Sendak, with his squatly figures and closely hatched lines that recall the artists of the last century, succeeds. The pictures are very appropriate to the text. They hint subtly at violent elements, as when a hanged man's feet extend down into a picture from a top margin in "The Two Journeymen".

This tale concerns two tradesmen, a carefree, generous tailor and a prudent, selfish cobbler, who make a long journey together. On the trip, the cobbler sells morsels of life-sustaining bread to his friend, for the price of cutting out first one eye and then the other eye. At night, in pain and weariness, the tailor sleeps beneath a gallows on which two poor sinners are hanged. One of the dead men speaks and tells the tailor to bathe his eyes with dew from the corpses and gallows intermingled. This dew will restore sight. The illustration is not as unpleasant as either the language or the content. The language is rhythmic in tone, and has the archaic flavour of lovingly-told tales, polished in their gruesome style. Children not frightened by the tales in Grimm will hardly be frightened by Sendak's drawings.

In the context of this report, permission was denied for the reproduction of illustrations by Maurice Sendak from *The Juniper Tree*.

Reviewers have called *The Juniper Tree* Sendak's best work yet, monumental and compelling. The pen-and-ink drawings are small, but the figures loom large, filling the space with hypnotic power. Two reviewers' comments are relevant:

The wicked Queen in "Snow White" is like no other artist's – a motherly middle-aged woman pensively smiling. Only her bright, fixed gaze betrays her obsessive narcissism, her joy when she thought she had eaten Snow White's lung and liver.<sup>11</sup>

All the same, I don't think I'd recommend these volumes for the nursery shelves, just like that. It's true that the worst stories (in respect, that is, of the terror they might cause) have the best endings. The fiercer twists of these folk tales – even their more brutal turns of humour – might disturb any child reading them alone.<sup>12</sup>

The close, dark line drawings of Sendak resemble in some way the illustrations of Gustave Doré who engraved the plates for *Les Contes de Perrault* (1862). Doré's wolf in bed with a surprised Red Riding Hood is a masterpiece, a delicate hinting at lasciviousness. An illustration from the story of "Little Poucet", showing an ogre about to cut the throats of his seven daughters, was suppressed in the first English edition of the these tales. Doré, like many of the best illustrators of children's work, did not illustrate primarily for children but for adults and children alike.

The American Maurice Sendak and the Englishman Arthur Rackham (1867-1939) have been contrasted as the two twentieth-century artists who represent opposite extremes in illustration for children's books.<sup>13</sup> Sendak creates a psychological atmosphere at one with the text he illustrates, but Rackham produces a fantastical invention that is a cameo piece, replete with details of



Illustration by Gustave Doré from "Little Poucet", *Les Contes de Perrault*, c. 1862

costume and setting. Rackham's emotional detachment may primarily appeal to adults and not always to the children. He is an artist who can clarify the text but who can also complement it by his imaginative interpretation. Rackham admits that he was at one period very strongly influenced by the unusual genius of Aubrey Beardsley. His illustrations have appeared to at least one critic to be:

... unnecessarily repulsive ... so often his characters, even the good ones, peer out of the dark embellished with carbuncles, thin dripping noses, gnarled and deformed limbs, cracking skin and tusk-like teeth. Like the forest scene in Disney's *Snow White* his trees sprout clutching misshapen arms and hideous chuckling faces, effective but also rather gratuitous in their seeming desire to frighten children at all costs.<sup>14</sup>

This may be true but, none the less, Rackham's illustrations kept the frightening fantasies at bay by clearly indicating that the land was make-believe, a kingdom of faerie.

Rackham spanned the century, dying on the eve of the World War II, at the close of a golden age of children's book illustration. War and post-war economies affected children's publishing and it was not until the 1960s that a resurgence of illustration in children's work once again took place. New techniques both in art and in printing allowed the re-emergence of artists, particularly in Europe, who used children's books as vehicles for series of pictures on the subject. These pictures may not be violent, but rather simply incomprehensible to children, as artists can express themselves without much regard for the children's tastes. Several critics, and artists themselves, have commented on either poor illustrations in both cheap and quality texts or poor texts accompanying handsome, well-produced (and expensive) picture books.<sup>15</sup>



Illustration by Arthur Rackham from  
"Hop-o'-my-thumb", *The Arthur Rackham Fairy Book*

Children, the audience that ultimately should be satisfied, appear to tolerate almost any illustration, provided the story is one they enjoy. Bad art is easy to understand, usually accompanies stories with all the popular elements, and is readily available in the cheaper editions of children's books.

Excellent art may sometimes be inaccessible; it may be too abstract, surrealistic, or unusual for children to appreciate unless accompanied by an absorbing story with which children can identify. At present, English and American books are less likely to be influenced in this direction, but there are definitely artists who are producing material that is as much for adults as for children. Charles Keeping of Britain is such an artist. The list of books he has illustrated is long; in recent books his illustrations have become much more forceful. He illustrated two controversial novels based on Greek mythology: *The God Beneath the Sea* (Longman, 1970) and *The Golden Shadow* (Longman, 1973), by Leon Garfield and Edward Blishen. Leon Garfield is a writer of historical fiction for children; he has been called a child's Dickens. Edward Blishen is an educator, editor, and author of children's books. These

men collaborated to produce two novels, updating Greek mythology by removing the Victorian upholstery and placing the tales in a narrative framework. The basis for this refurbishing was Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths*; it became in these authors' hands a continuous account of the origin of the world, of the struggle of man against the mysterious elements that surround him and against his own nature. Blishen states:

[We] have for a long time been concerned with what seems to us to be something that's happening inside children's literature, and is happening inside society as a whole. We're no longer quite so sure what children are, or who children are, or when children are. We must all be aware that in the last few years children's literature has been moving, at its senior end, closer and closer to adult literature. This book has certainly taken us further than we've ever been taken before in our writing for children. It has taken us very far indeed. We believe that it was essential to go as far as we have in our treatment of human passion and of violence, of necessary cosmic violence. We felt this must be done, it was right to do it, because these are the themes, the concerns, the preoccupations with which our children are, we know, at the moment filled. We offer no apology for what we hope is the meaningful violence which is written into our version, nor for our reference to the strongest of human passions.<sup>16</sup>

Reviewers were divided in their opinions about how well these authors succeeded in presenting these myths not as an antiquated collection but as a coherent account. One reviewer said that the myths were zestfully retold, "with striking flashes of language", "stripped of pseudoclassical draperies" and presented in a "highly coloured primitive atmosphere".<sup>17</sup> Another reviewer, Alan Garner, himself a notable re-creator of mythology for children, calls the book rubbish, very bad, and impossible to read! The prose is "overblown Victorian ... cliché ridden ... falsely poetic, a grandiloquent mess."<sup>18</sup> The review continues, quoting from the book:

Worst of all the authors are so coy in their efforts to be frank about sexuality that only the cumulative absurdity saves them from prurience:

"... and in a white passion of wings [he] quenched his restless heat"

"the Titan's daughter was already quick with child"

"her time was at hand"

"her gown was torn, her hair awry and everything about her proclaimed her ruin".

Whatever the text, the drawings emphasize the effect "relating the stories to the primitive roots of myth, rather than to the civilized commentators."<sup>19</sup> The illustrator Charles Keeping (1924- ) "justifies the survival of Greek mythology ... a singular vision of what Classical myth must have been. Two drawings especially – Cronus and Prometheus – are more terrible and beautiful than Goya."<sup>20</sup> That praise is also a trifle overblown, although not entirely inept.

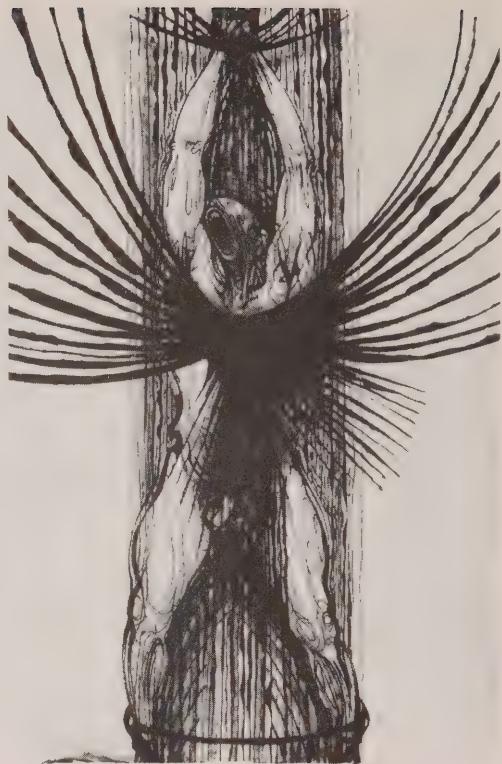
The drawings certainly removed the Victorian upholstery, and are a departure from the Attic vase style of illustration that often accompanies these tales. Keeping



"Cronus" by Charles Keeping from *The God Beneath the Sea* by Leon Garfield and Edward Blishen

finds the myths disgusting because they are devoid of love and contain lust, rape, revenge, and violence of every kind.<sup>21</sup> As an artist he dislikes the problems presented by costume, authenticity, and the freezing of picture/text into a particular moment in time; he is concerned with people, emotions, and reactions in a violent context. In order to project this violence and cruelty visually, Keeping tries for a symbolic overtone, and he leaves the final decision to the viewers. The black-and-white drawings are emphatic, illuminating, and upsetting. In this case, the illustrations, rather than alleviating the effect of the text, actually augment the physical and psychological violence.

Talking on illustration generally, Keeping has defended himself against the charge that picture books today may be disturbing to children.<sup>22</sup> His defence is that it was difficult to see how anything could be more disturbing than the violence in such tales as *The Juniper Tree*. Keeping feels that with the immediacy and impact of film, his books have changed. His recent books are consciously unlike any of his earlier works. As an author-illustrator he has recently produced three books that were originally turned down for publication



"Prometheus" by Charles Keeping from *The God Beneath the Sea* by Leon Garfield and Edward Blishen

because of the sophistication of the themes. One picture book, *Joseph's Yard* (Oxford, 1969), deals with loneliness, jealousy, and death. Another, *The Garden Shed* (Oxford, 1971), deals with humiliation.

The third, *Through the Window* (Oxford, 1970), for children in kindergarten through Grade Three, is about boredom and indifference. Keeping said that it deals with the rejection of an unwanted sight, and that the sudden violence which results in a death is "shown but not in its worst sense".<sup>23</sup> In the picture book, Joseph, the boy in the story, watches the street below through his window. An old woman and her dog live on the street. One day, Joseph sees the dog trampled by galloping horses from a nearby brewery. The old woman then picks up her dog. Joseph mists his window pane with his breath and draws a stick figure of the woman carrying her dog. Both dog and woman are smiling. The stick figures are crude, as a child's would be, and are not unduly alarming. There have not been widespread reports on children's reactions to this picture book. It is quite possible that the book vaguely confuses rather than frightens or disturbs. It is an adult critic who has pointed out that, since the text must be read without

reference to any of the illustrator's background comments on the symbolism, the apparent pleasure of all parties in the scene is difficult to interpret. Even understanding the author's purpose does not make the book less disturbing, only more intelligible. How does a child react to or understand Joseph's response to this unhappy incident? Is the boy pretending that death has not happened? Keeping would agree with that interpretation. Is such a pretence a good defence for a child if, for example, the child faces the grief of a pet's death? This pretence is neither a healthy nor a useful concept to present in a picture book.

*Through the Window* is one of the books mentioned in "Themes of Violence in Picture Books", a short paper by Karen Harris presented at an annual convention of the New York State English Council in 1974.<sup>24</sup> She finds it a most distressing book, and would probably agree that *Keeping* has entered a stage of very mature, powerful, and disturbing artwork. Harris also criticizes two other children's books for using violence heavy-handedly to present moral issues.

*The Hunter, the Tick and the Gumeroo* (Cowles, 1971), by George Mendoza is a moral tale, though not readily comprehended by children. The theme is that man destroys his own life in his destruction of wild life. A suitable moral for the ecologically conscious generation, but not suitably presented. A hunter, on the trail of the fierce gumeroo, shoots first a rabbit and then a quail as he goes along. A small wood tick attached itself to his cheek and, as the hunter scratches, a lump grows around the tick. Quickly and malignantly the lump grows, until in desperation, the hunter turns his gun upon himself – or at least upon the monstrous growth engulfing him. The lump recedes, and the man is left dead with a neat bullet hole in the centre of his forehead. A pessimistic book, showing suicide to the child. Would a more constructive tale have resulted if the hunter's lump, like Pinocchio's nose, was reduced in size every time the hunter performed an ecologically good deed?

Another book Harris mentions is a much criticized picture book, *Bang Bang You're Dead* (Harper and Row, 1969), by Fitzhugh and Scoppettone. The publisher's jacket on this book states that it is a simple and effective presentation of a child's first discovery of the reality of war. The moral is a pacifist one. In the book, a number of children play at war on a favourite hill. When rivals appear to claim the hill, a real street fight with sticks and stones is fought on a pre-arranged day. The text is as graphic as are the pictures:

"Give up, puke face. You don't have have a chance," said Big Mike.

"Up your nose, you freak-out," yelled James.

Many children are hurt. Violence is the central commitment of a book purporting to sell peace. The book is 29 pages long; there are 30 individual sketches of bruised, bleeding children, and nine pages are

devoted to the battle. The incidence of violence is magnified when it occupies the full-page spreads of a picture book. In longer books, violence may be much more diminished by being in only one visual representation among many, or by being present in only a few paragraphs among pages of text. In long stories, violence may well act as justice, a summation in a paragraph or two. At the end of *Bang, Bang . . .*, the children decide that it hurts too much to really fight. They will share the hill and return to pretend wars and cries of "Bang, bang, you're dead." The jacket's claim is not tenable; children's fisticuffs are not actual war, and while the moral may be a good and useful one, it is lost and denied in a book whose pictorial and textual content is given over to violence.



Illustration by Louise Fitzhugh from *Bang Bang You're Dead* by Louise Fitzhugh and Sandra Scoppettone

Harris also mentions a picture book by Jean Tomi Ungerer, *The Beast of Monsieur Racine* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), with particular reference to the background pictures that show a world in chaos. The violent backdrop is in contrast to the non-violent humorous tale. Mr. Racine discovers a strange beast in his garden. This beast becomes an object of scientific curiosity. Before an audience of scientists, the beast reveals itself as two giggling children. What an embarrassment for Mr. Racine and the learned gentlemen! There is a riot in the gallery. Mr. Racine understands and forgives the children their prank, so all remain friends. A gentle satire upon learned societies, a funny story, and a non-violent one except for the background. Here there are various maimed, trapped animals or people violated or violating. There are the acts of the rioters – individually, as when a man breaks a chair over a woman's head, and collectively, as when the crowd overturns a bus. A woman shoves her arm into a man's mouth, while cripples display empty sleeves or artificial limbs. In a humorous tale with a good story, why include gratuitous violence? Although the beast, Mr. Racine, and the characters are all line drawings and odd looking, they are not shown as living in a fantasy world. These people may be caricatures, but they are all

operating in a context of reality. They are human beings behaving in aggressive, hostile, and murderous ways. This book won *The New York Times* Choice of Best Illustrated Children's Books of the Year in 1971 and a Children's Book Showcase Title in 1972: "the artist is in rare form, liberally spreading his particular kind of madness – in full colour – over every page. The double spreads are Hogarthian with caricature and frenetic activity; to children the pictures will be roaring slapstick."<sup>25</sup> Ungerer, even more than Sendak, has been accepted slowly as a children's author-illustrator. His work as an artist for adults has been more widely acknowledged. His poster art is possibly pornographic, often bizarre, and nearly always satirical, like that of his artistic mentor Wilhelm Busch.<sup>26</sup>

In Ungerer's work for children, the satire is more controlled and, although elements of the bizarre creep in, the ending is always happy. His tales are filled with disaster, accidents, mechanical breakdowns, and the casual violence of modern life. In *The Hat* (Parents' Magazine Press, 1970) a dashing cadet, while flirting with a young mother, flicks the ashes of his fat cigar into an occupied baby carriage. Is the occupant to be incinerated? The style of illustration is the open sketch, possibly a lampoon for parents and a cartoon for children. This type of picture is cited as an example

...of Ungerer's clear-eyed documentation of the folly and the wickedness rampant in the world. . . . The excitement he provides is out of the daily range of most well cared-for children and responsible adults, but it always seems to be within the realm of life's larger possibilities, the very ones that cause us all so much hidden anxiety.<sup>27</sup>



*The Hat* by Tomi Ungerer

In *No Kiss for Mother* (Harper and Row, 1973), a bad spoiled boy-cat exasperates all about him. There is quarrelling, fighting and spanking, and tantrums. In the far background of one scene, there is a soldier looking suspiciously as if he could be a Nazi officer, and the grey-black drawings create an unpleasant pre-war atmosphere. Only adults may see these disturbing nuances; probably the children simply delight in crash-bang and rumpus. They must! So much of their literature is full of life in a violent uproar.



*No Kiss for Mother* by Tomi Ungerer

Much of the violence is of the slap-stick type, so characteristic of animated cartoons of the late 1950s like "Bugs Bunny" and "Tom and Jerry", where massive violence was dealt to characters who perennially snapped back for more assault. A good example is *The Bear and the Fly* (Crown, 1976), a picture book without text by Paula Winter. Meant for the very young child who can follow the story through pictures, the book shows a family of bears. Father Bear tries to swat a fly, breaks the house apart, and knocks himself and his family unconscious in the attempt. Father Bear acts as a young child might, heedlessly hitting out without forethought of consequences. Perhaps children enjoy this scenario because it often reflects their own behaviour. Perhaps, nurtured on television cartoons, they simply like to see violence for the sake of its action and surprise.



*The Bear and the Fly* by Paula Winter

Illustrations with violent themes have occurred throughout the history of publishing for children, except perhaps for some carefully produced books for children sheltered in nineteenth-century nurseries. Gruesome and frightening illustration even crept into these sanctuaries by way of acceptable nursery literature like Mother Goose, "awful warning" stories, and "divine songs". Illustration of violence was present in the not-quite-so-acceptable but highly popular literature like chapbooks, penny dreadfuls, and comics.<sup>28</sup> At worst, some of these illustrations are horrific and surely frightening to the sensitive child; at best, they are in poor taste. Reasons can be advanced to justify, or at least to explain, the past and continuing presence of violence in children's illustrations. The violent element is hardly unexpected, given that so many of the incidents in children's literature are violent. Sometimes, the violence has been considered by adults to be a positive good, having educative value in making explicit the punishment that would follow on certain actions. Violence is excitement, and therefore an always indispensable part of popular literature – which, naturally, is an economically viable proposition. Popular literature follows fashion, and permissiveness is a recognized trend in modern media. Children's literature follows the fashion of adult literature more slowly, and is always censored to some extent. Mass media for adults make it possible for the artist-illustrator to depict aspects of sexual violence, pornography, and eroticism more openly now than in the past. In this area, the artist's freedom to express himself has been released from the artificial constraint of the publisher's requirements, and this new freedom is apparent in children's books. A child sees both the newly admitted types of violence (sexual) and the age-old types of violence (physical, psychological) that intermittently come under attack. Children may choose books from the panorama of all

that has been published for them because, unlike literature for adults, children's literature has a timeless quality. Children unknowingly read books from the past and see the work of long-dead artists. Wilhelm Busch, Gustave Doré, Cruikshank, Caldecott, Kate Greenaway, Walter Crane, Leslie Brooke, Arthur Rackham, and so on may be readily viewed in books on sale today. These past artists exist alongside the presently active artists like Sendak, Ungerer, Keating, Ardizzone, Brian Wildsmith, Nancy Burkert, Roger Duvoisin, and so on. The list is long and honourable.

Several artists, now as in the past, do not produce solely for children. Their work reflects the maturity, artistry, and style of individual talent. No one would wish it otherwise; lest art for children become the sole province of hack workers. There is a great array of art for children to view, and it happens that a number of talented artists do not choose to emphasize the violent aspect of illustration for children. They produce aesthetically pleasing art, created from non-violent motifs such as ethnic costume, fantastic and fabulous fairy kingdoms, caricatures, and colourful abstracts and collages. Their techniques and their personal modes of expression are not attuned to the violent, even when the violence is present in the text. These artists alleviate the impact of the text, and also give the child a visual dimension that extends his perception of art.

With all the variety of art in children's literature, it is difficult if not impossible to measure the quality and quantity of violence that appears in children's illustrations. Even if they were measurable, what then? The issue of violence would come down to the assessment of each individual work. There would be the contribution of the artist to consider, and his desire to interpret the text freely in graphic terms. There would also be the variable influence of a given illustration on an individual child. Children should always be encouraged

to banish the picture that they feel they mustn't see. Few persons argue any longer for the natural innocence of children and for their over-protection. It is not possible nor desirable to shield children from what is painful, frightening, or violent; pictures in the child's book are part of that presentation. The danger, then, lies not in presenting violent material to children but in presenting it gratuitously, emphatically, frequently, and in a mode that distorts its role. Violence should not be glorified, nor consistently presented as a mode of appropriate action. The text of violence should not always be given visual emphasis. A visual amplification of violence is most apt to happen in the popular art of today, the photograph and the comic strip. Children do share with the whole community whatever art forms exist, and they share in full measure the popular art of film and comic strip. As popular art expresses violence, children will see violence. Keeping them from viewing too much gratuitous violence, or violence unrooted in total context, is a two-fold problem. In the first place, popular art – which is not often intended for children at all but in which children participate – would have to become less violent if children are to be prevented from seeing violence portrayed. In the second place, the exceptional and good-quality art in children's books should be made more accessible to all children. It is likely that the first conditions may be met as the fashions in art (both the art of illustration and of literature) change. If the milieu for expressing violence becomes more circumscribed than it is at present – not perhaps from the force of law but from the dictates of fashion – art will follow suit, particularly art for children. The problem of making children's literature and good illustration, whether it expresses violence or not, more accessible than popular art is extremely difficult and not solvable in the foreseeable future. The media that create popularity can help to popularize the good as well as the bad. The educators and parents can continue to promote children's literature, hoping that the solution is to make this literature at least as accessible as any other popular art, so that children will have an opportunity to discriminate in visual taste.

## Chapter Seven

# The Realistic Novel

The realistic junior novel has become a major part of publishing for children and young adults. It is welcomed by parents, educators, and librarians on several grounds, particularly for older children and teenagers who are the audience for most of these books. The junior novel is often considered to be a remedy for reluctance in reading and so it is promoted in classrooms and school libraries. The National Council of Teachers of English issues an annotated list of these books for adolescents "to read, to enjoy and to grow by." The fifth edition, *Your Reading* (NCTE, 1975) includes notes on over 1,500 junior books, both fiction and non-fiction. The junior novel encourages reluctant readers because its format tends to return to initial steps in book introduction – reduced vocabulary, shortened sentences, larger or wider-spaced type with fewer lines, many illustrations, and action plots or contemporary stories. Discursive exposition, descriptive passages, and character analysis are largely absent. The strong narrative must frequently employ action; the simplest action is the excitement or suspense generated from physical or emotional violence. Thus, increasing realism in these books is often equated with increasing levels of violence.

In addition to the increased readability of the junior novels, there is the argument that these books are contemporary, dealing with the realities of adolescent life today. The NCTE recommended booklist for junior high students is divided into sections on being adventurous, being free, being a family member, being friends and in love, being a member of a minority, being physically handicapped, or just growing up.

The new permissiveness in adult fiction generally has filtered into adolescent literature. In many ways this is a positive move, allowing certain unhappy or struggling teens to realize that their problems are not unique. At other times the sordid, violent aspects presented have caused critics to assert that children learn attitudes from the books that they read, and that the incidence of aggression or violence is conducive to anti-social acts. Trends in children's literature parallel trends in the other mass media.

For adolescent girls, the material is not overly full of

violent activity. Cultural, psychological, and biological factors tend to inhibit women from becoming the aggressive sex. Literature created for girls tends quite naturally to reflect these inhibitions. Girls read about family relationships, romances, and problems of being physically attractive, as well as about some social problems such as prejudice. The books do not tend to overplay violence; sometimes it even seems unreal. In Natalie Carson's *The Empty Schoolhouse* (Harper and Row, 1965) a young black girl has difficulty integrating into a white school. The townspeople react violently to the integration, take up arms, and the girl is shot in the foot. The townspeople all are immediately contrite, the heroine is redeemed, and integration is a *fait accompli*. The violence is totally subordinated to the "heroine" fantasy in a book that is neither worth condemning nor promoting for its simplistic approach to racial problems.

Violence is more realistic in the books of Kristin Hunter. In *Soul Brothers and Sister Lou* (Scribner, 1968), one black youngster is killed when young musicians in a ghetto are harassed by police. Eventual success does not erase the pain of early experience. Hunter's *Guests in the Promised Land* (Scribner, 1973) is a series of short stories about black teenagers in housing projects, on welfare and employed in menial jobs. William Armstrong's *Sounder* (Harper and Row, 1972) is an example of a typical book on racial tensions presently produced for teenagers. *Sounder* is a story of a poor black family before the Civil Rights movement. When the son in the family visits his father, imprisoned for a theft of meat, the boy is humiliated by the guard and dreams of a brutal revenge. Both boys and girls read with enjoyment the stories that deal with problems of minority groups, and there is much publishing in this area.

Publishers also find a market for books aimed at female adolescents and dealing with boy-meets-girl problems, marriage, or pregnancy. *A Wild Thing* (Macmillan, 1970) by Jean Renvoize tells an unhappy and violent story about a girl who lives in the wilds, a semi-feral child. She has been attacked by the villagers

to whom she went for help. This is a pessimistic book, and of it the author said:

*A Wild Thing* was written as an adult novel and published as such in England, but the American publisher considered that the book would do best if presented as a young adult book in the States. It was inspired by a news item of an actual boy whose bones were found on a Scottish hillside and whose identity was discovered primarily from his dental condition. He was about twelve and an orphan. From that I developed the story of a girl of nearly sixteen whose eventual fate was similar. My new novel is unlikely to be published as suitable for adolescents.<sup>1</sup>

The book was cited as an American Library Association Notable Book of 1970, indicating that the publisher was quite right about the marketing of the book as "young adult" in the United States.

An American example that is more frightening than many in dealing with the reality of abortion is *Bonnie Jo Go Home* (Bantam, 1973) by Jeanette Eyerly. Bonnie Jo, a 16-year-old, is in an unfamiliar city trying to rid herself of an unwanted pregnancy. The details of an abortion late in pregnancy are discussed, and the book appears partly to serve the age-old purpose of "awful warning".

Some of the books dealing with drugs, another concern of modern realistic fiction, also fall into the "awful warning" category. *Go Ask Alice* (Avon, 1972) is typical example and was made into a film. Alice is a girl of middle-class background who becomes hooked on drugs and who suffers degradation and exploitation because of her habit. Eventually unable to control her life any longer, she commits suicide. Stories about drugs interest both boys and girls, and there are numerous titles to the subject, from Frank Bonham's *Cool Cat* (Dell, 1971) to Maia Wojciechowska's *Tuned Out* (Harper and Row, 1968). In *Cool Cat*, two friends, Buddy and Little Pie, aspire to get out of their drug-ridden "Dogtown". Buddy wants to be a lifeguard and Little Pie a police cadet. The friends manage to start a hauling business with a truck. The truck is maliciously damaged by a rival gang, and Little Pie retaliates by destroying the gang leader's car. Life on the street, gang fights, or personal vendettas are a part of most of these books concerned with contemporary urban teenage life. The violence is part of the scenario and does not totally dominate the story.

Books for boys tend to have much more aggression and violence than do books for girls. Not that girls are denied the violent stories; on the contrary, girls read the stories that are written for them and also those written for boys. Boys, on the other hand, will rarely read girls' books. Both boys and girls read titles written for the adult audience.

Curiously, an early and popular junior novel about gang warfare was written by a teenaged girl, Sally E. Hinton. *The Outsiders* (Dell, 1967) is about three brothers who live together in poverty. The youngest boy tells of constant fighting between two gangs, the Socs and the Greasers – fighting that kills one boy and aids

in the destruction of several others. Gang war, drugs, and teenage daily life in a slum neighbourhood are part of Hinton's *That Was Then, This Is Now* (Dell, 1971). Hinton defends her insistence on violence on the grounds that violence is a part of a teenager's life.<sup>2</sup> It would appear that real-life violence is also part of the young child's life and literary times. In addition to the violence of folk and fairy tale, in which corporal or capital punishment is dispensed in a few paragraphs and presented as a kind of rough justice, there is also the violence that is not neutralized by fantasy.

There are children separated from, or abused by, parents or molested by strangers. There is also evidence of violence resulting from emotional disorder, appearing as entertainment for children in their first picture books or stories. Julia Cunningham's *Dorp Dead* (Pantheon, 1965) tells the story of Gilly, a self-contained intelligent orphan, who is taken into the household of the town eccentric, Mr. Kobalt, a wood-worker. Gilly is happy in the meticulously ordered life of this household wherein "no carelessness or rearrangement will ever be permitted." He is soon taunted by children his own age, who think him as mad as Kobalt. When Gilly glares at them defiantly, the children, frightened at a strangeness that defies them, back away, and he retreats even more into the solitary clock-regulated confines of life with Kobalt and Mash, his dog. One day, Mash is bloodied and beaten and when Gilly has the courage to question Kobalt, he is told that "He [the dog] is getting old. I will soon need another dog and Mash must learn to die." At that, Gilly wonders if he too is learning to die. He learns that a wooden cage is being prepared for his prison, and he realizes that pain gives Kobalt pleasure. Gilly disturbs the organization of Kobalt's workroom, subconsciously testing the reaction of Kobalt, who flies into a murderous rage. A major part of this story concerns Kobalt's attempts to destroy Gilly and Gilly's eventual escape. At the crucial moment when Gilly is injured and has no resources left, the dog Mash attacks Kobalt and saves Gilly. As Gilly goes to a new life he leaves a last misspelled message on Kobalt's door. The message is "Dorp Dead!"

The book features an 11-year-old boy and is suggested for ages ten and up, although it is probably read by children from eight to 12. It has been both condemned and praised; whatever its literary merit, it is certainly an unusual book to present to young children. It does show Gilly as escaping, and it does have a happy ending; readers may be pleased with these elements and unaffected by the objections of adults. The happy ending is contrived and so departs from the actual realism that is lauded – a realism that recognizes emotional disturbance and hints at the *folie à deux* that underlies the plot. The themes of mental illness, alienation, disaffection, and rejection, along with the implied emotional or physical violence, are present in literature for quite young children.

There is yet another theme related to violence that creeps into literature for adolescent boys and is frequently found in books studied in English classes. Jean Kelty mentions some of these books in a short paper, "The Cult of the Kill in Adolescent Fiction", presented at an Annual Conference on English Education in the Elementary School in 1974.<sup>3</sup> The theme is that the killing of something, such as an animal, is a rite of passage, an initiation into manhood.

Kelty rightly remarks that the literary stereotyping of girls as passive onlookers has recently been well documented. Boys have been shown to do more adventuresome things, be involved more than girls in activities, and also range further afield to follow their more interesting pursuits. There is, unremarked upon, a parallel stereotyping of boys, a conditioning to violence, that may be more injurious to society generally than the relegation of the female to a passive role.

Many books dealing with the coming of age of young males show that manhood and maturity are attained by pitting oneself against the animal, or natural, world. Often this world is symbolized as evil, alien to man, an external force that must be fought. The defeat of the external evil establishes the maturation of the boy and his ability to conduct himself henceforth as a man among men. In contrast, few books portray the fact that maturation may be a battle with self, an issue of self-acceptance or self-understanding.

One book that troubles Kelty is *The Yearling* (Scribner, 1966) by Majorie Kinnan Rawlings. *The Yearling* is sometimes read in Ontario classrooms between grades nine and 11. Originally published in the late 1930s, and winner of the 1939 Pulitzer Prize Award, it is a much more substantial novel than the junior novels of today, and thus lends itself to discussion in the classroom. Jody Baxter and his family live in the Florida scrubs, eking out their living by hunting and trapping when necessary. As the book nears its end, Jody must kill his pet deer who is destroying the crops by which the family lives. The act is Jody's admission into manhood, acknowledged by his father but, as for Jody, "He did not believe he should ever again love anything, man or woman or his own child, as he had loved the yearling. He would be lonely all his life. But a man took it for his share and went on." Kelty asserts that while such acts as killing pet animals may be inevitable and that while Jody, forced by circumstances, did what was necessary, he did not grow into maturity thereby. A boy does not become a man by killing that which he loves and determining not to give love to any person again. Actions such as those portrayed in *The Yearling* tend to telescope the act of inflicting pain into the pain of grief. Jody might grow to maturity by experiencing pain and grief, but that is not to be confused with the experience of inflicting pain. The same theme is repeated in Fred Gipson's *Old Yeller* (Harper and Row, 1956), a perennially popular tale in which a boy must kill his dog because it seems the dog

might develop rabies. The family is unwilling to wait and see if the dog does become rabid; they simply "can't take that chance". The boy's father tells the sorrowing boy to "try to forget it and go on being a man". Often the animal is not a pet but a wild animal, as in Verne Davis' *The Devil Cat Screamed* (Morrow, 1966), in which a young cowboy comes face to face with a cougar that he has chosen for a personal enemy. Or "the enemy" may simply be animals in general, as in Hal Borland's novel *When Legends Die* (Lippincott, 1963), written for older boys. Tom Black Bull, a young, disillusioned Ute Indian takes out his frustrations and anger against white society with harsh treatment of the horses that he rides in rodeos. This book carries the story further than completion of a violent act as growth to manhood, in that Tom decides not to kill a bear he has stalked. He realizes that his trouble is within himself. He rejects the self that was the senseless killer, the devil-rider of rodeo circuit, and he finally finds peace and maturity in resolving his identity problems by means other than violence. Boy against nature or animal is too familiar a theme to be multiplied here.

Robert Newton Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die* (Knopf, 1972), an autobiographical story, follows directly in the tradition of *The Yearling* or *Old Yeller*. The language has matured in Peck's book, but plot – boyhood into manhood in rural America – remains the same. The book opens with Robert telling how he viciously and repeatedly kicked a cow in the udder while she was giving birth. For this help in the birthing, he receives a piglet. Another incident in the book describes a fight between a dog and weasel, in which both animals are trapped in a closed barrel until there is a victor and a vanquished. A short moral tag on the brutality of such a fight accompanies the many paragraphs devoted to the description. There is also a lengthy description of mating the pet pig to a boar (a topic that would formerly have been forbidden in children's literature). Pinky, the pig, is barren and the climax of the book occurs as Robert must help his father butcher Pinky. His father tells him that this action is "what being a man is all about, boy. It's just doing what's got to be done." The father touches the boy's face with his "cruel pig-sticking" fist and Robert cannot keep himself from kissing his father's bloody hand. "I kissed his hand again and again, with all its stink and fatty slime of dead pork. So he'd understand that I'd forgive him even if he killed me." The National Council of Teachers of English recommends this book as portraying a Vermont "Walton" family, in which the problems of adolescence are helped by an understanding family and friends.

Violence as the initiation into adulthood is a universal theme. The initiation is concomitant with the acquisition of skills. The boy has learned to use a gun, or a hunting knife, or a rodeo lasso, or a weapon/implement of some sort, and now he demonstrates that skill. The practice of martial arts, including the skills of

judo or karate, confer the status of manhood. The association of skills with initiation is more clearly seen in movies than in books, because the techniques of violence can be stressed and visually displayed in ways not possible with print alone. Thus the hero, or the super-man in film, is also the super-user of his weapons or his fists. His technique of karate or judo is incredible and/or his marksmanship superlative. Violence may be presented as a flaw, but it is one in which both villain and hero share. The hero has acquired more skills with his arsenal of weapons than has the villain, and so it is not brute strength alone that determines the outcome, although, if it comes down to an issue of strength, the heroes are not lacking. Initiation into manhood and demonstration of leadership are dependent upon the display of violent skills. This is a familiar motif in many westerns or crime dramas that are published for adults but read by adolescents as well.

As a doctoral dissertation, Gloria Blatt recently did a content analysis of the violent episodes in children's literature.<sup>4</sup> She sampled 170 realistic novels, all of which were selected by the American Library Association as Notable Books for Children published between 1960 and 1970. The purpose was to determine any change in the proportion of violent episodes in the stories on the list over the decade. Episodes were analyzed according to the total space devoted to violence, the details or intensity of descriptions, the roles assumed by the heroes and villains, the relationships of the participants, and the kinds of violent acts perpetrated as well as the value judgments placed on these acts. A violent action was defined as an overt expression of force intended to hurt or to kill. Books were scored on all these factors in a systematic way, and the findings for all books in a given year were averaged and a trend established. The discernible trend over the ten-year period was toward a greater expression of violence. On average, the number of pages devoted to violence increased from 12 per cent in 1960 to 15 per cent in 1970. Interestingly enough, however, Blatt found that, while the actual depiction of violence increased, the expressed or implied approval of violence by the authors marginally decreased over the decade.

The books were divided into categories of modern realistic and historical fiction. Modern realistic fiction scored 11 per cent on the average of total pages devoted to violence, while the average for historical fiction was 23 per cent – more than twice as much aggressive action. One reason for the disparity is that historical fiction frequently concerns war. When historical-fiction books with war settings were separated from those with non-war settings, the average score for the former was 35 per cent, while the average score for the latter was 17 per cent.

It appeared that, increasingly over the decade, the heroes in the story were instigating and committing the violence. Villains still committed more violence than heroes – 23 per cent as against 18 per cent – but the gap

between "good guys" and "bad guys" was not wide. More than half of the aggressive deeds were done by minor figures. Unlike actual life situations, where violence most frequently occurs between persons who are related or acquainted, 67 per cent of the violence in books tends to occur between strangers. In historical fiction there is the clash between warring strangers; only in realistic modern fiction does some violence between intimates occur. The degree of intimacy is often at one remove or more from violent clashes with parents. In *Dorp Dead*, the boy fought with a newly appointed guardian; frequently the violence in books occurs between children and their guardians, whether relatives or housekeepers.

The aggressive activity in the notable books of the 1960s included a full range, with shooting and killing appearing most frequently. Action was counted as violent if it included belligerent sports such as boxing and wrestling. The treatment of details was realistic, with much material included that would appeal to the senses of the reader. Authors of children's books depend on word pictures and illustrations to create the illusion of reality, so much detail enhances the illusion. In the majority of books in the study, the writers included information about the effects of the acts of aggression that were portrayed. Much aggressive literature functions as a means of socialization to violence, to cruelty, to an insensitivity to life so that children, particularly boys, might be prepared for aggressive action in life, including soldiering.<sup>5</sup>

In Blatt's study, violence was central to the story in fewer than 10 per cent of the cases studied, and most of these stories deal with war. World War II is a popular topic in both fiction and non-fiction publishing for adults. The themes of war read by adults are also popular in juvenile versions. There are many stories of civilian life in an embattled country, such as Martha Stiles' *Darkness Over the Land* (Dial, 1966) or Eric Haugaard's *The Little Fishes* (Houghton, 1967). Some stories, such as Treadgold's *We Couldn't Leave Dinah* (Cape, 1941), are essentially non-violent. This story is about German and British children, members of a pony club, who discover German invasion plans on their Channel island in the 1940s. The book was popular during the war years and was reprinted frequently until the mid-1960s. *Carrie's War* (Lippincott, 1973) by Nina Bawden is a domestic, non-violent story about a girl and her young brother who are evacuated to Wales for safety during the war. These stories are more child-like in their appeal. They tend to explore relationships between people rather than to capitalize on the action of combatants, as do many stories of war. Fiction about war is not extensively discussed in Blatt's study, because, *a priori*, violence is present in many of these books. Violence may well be the central core of war stories.<sup>6</sup>

While war is a present theme in children's literature, crime and the hunt for criminals – familiar topics of

television drama – are largely absent from books of good quality written for children. (Obvious exceptions are the series books like *The Three Investigators*, *The Hardy Boys* et cetera.) Lockhart Amerman's *Guns in the Heather* (Harcourt, 1963) was the only book about criminals elected as a notable book by the American Library Association in the decade of Blatt's study. The verisimilitude of a cops-and-robbers shoot-out is not easily achieved in a book for youngsters. The violent incident, so telescoped and emphasized on the television screen, is not reflected in children's literature.

Some books involving criminals and mysteries have been promoted into standards for children – John Buchan's *The Thirty-nine Steps* or Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* novels. In the series books, like the *Hardy Boys*, or stories about other dauntless lads of derring-do, the heroes pit themselves in a battle of wit and sometimes a physical skirmish against criminals. But violence is not usually central to the plot, and the ultimate goals of major characters are rarely achieved through force. In children's books, the characters are not always uniformly well developed in the literary or artistic sense, but there is time in a book to indicate character development and to provide solutions in terms of increased maturity, external circumstances, or a hovering *deus ex machina*. The solution does not have to be a violent ending.

Blatt's study on violence in a selected sample of notable books concluded that, for the most part, treatment of violence in realistic fiction for children is a reflection of aggression in real life. While incidence of conflict in books may have increased somewhat in quantity, it has not changed appreciably in quality. Conflict is treated honestly without becoming the focal point of many stories. When there is fighting, readers may learn something about human behaviour and its results, because there are both realistic details and a certain amount of characterization.

As television has a relationship to reading, it is pertinent to compare the violence found in books and on the home screen. Blatt determined that the sample of children's literature analyzed was much less violent in content than the average television film. Even books of historical fiction, although frequently concerned with war, were significantly less violent than television drama. Her statement was based on a calculation from the U.S. National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence which estimated conservatively that an average of 6.7 acts of violence occur every hour on television. Blatt noted that if each of these episodes takes three minutes, then 20 minutes of every hour is concerned with some form of aggression. That is, 33 per cent of the time is devoted to violence, as opposed to an approximately 11 per cent average of violent incident by content in the notable children's books of 1960-1970. Television writers seek the sensational to keep viewers interested, and so the level of excitement is deliberately kept high by the use of such devices as violence.

Violence is integral to many television plots, but is most frequently peripheral to plots in children's literature. The peripheral aspect of violence in books is also indicated by the characters involved in the violent activity; in literature, the violence is often committed among minor characters. Television, however, works within time constraints, which result in a tendency to reduce the number of characters, to simplify the characterization, and, perforce, to pit hero against villain.

Television has either been excused or accused of sanitizing violence. The consequences of a violent action such as a shoot-out do not appear to the viewer to be too painful. The victim of a gunshot falls to the ground and is silent. The camera may move away to show not the victim, but the reactions of others in the scene. The details of the suffering victim are hidden; there are no continuing screams of pain, nor moaning, nor bleeding. However, increasingly, television watchers can expect to see more bloody and realistic scenes of suffering as the impact explosives used to simulate wounds on actors in films move onto the home screen.

Books, on the other hand, tend not to turn from the moment of violence, but to extend it in order to further the illusion of reality on the part of the reader. In *The Yearling*, written in the late 1930s, the following description of an animal's death is given. Flag, the yearling, has just been ineptly shot by Jody's mother and lies floundering beside a fence:

Jody ran to Flag. The yearling heaved to his three good legs and stumbled away, as though the boy himself were his enemy. He was bleeding from a torn left forequarter . . .

Flag ran on three legs in pain and terror. Twice he fell and Jody caught up to him. He shrieked, "Hit's me! Hit's me! Flag!"

Flag thrashed to his feet and was off again. Blood flowed in a steady stream. The yearling made the edge of the sink-hole. He wavered an instant and toppled. He rolled down the side. Jody ran after him. Flag lay beside the pool. He opened great liquid eyes and turned them on the boy with a glazed look of wonder. Jody pressed the muzzle of the gun barrel at the back of the smooth neck and pulled the trigger. Flag quivered a moment and then lay still.

(pp. 409-411)

In *Sounder*, published 30 years later, almost the same scene, the shooting of a pet is described. The dog, Sounder, has been callously and casually shot by a sheriff's deputy:

Sounder tried to rise but fell again. There was another yelp, this one constrained and plaintive . . . Sounder was running, falling, floundering, rising. The hind part of his body stayed up and moved from side to side, trying to lift the front part from the earth. He twisted, fell, and heaved his great shoulders. His hind paws dug into the earth. He pushed himself up. He staggered forward, sideways, then fell again. One leg did not touch the ground. A trail of blood, smeared and blotted, followed him. There was a large spot of mingled blood, hair and naked flesh on one shoulder. His head swung from side to side. He fell again and pushed his body along with his hind

legs. One side of his head was a mass of blood. The blast had torn off the whole side of his head and shoulder.

(pp. 27-28)

In the passage from *The Yearling*, there is not much blood or physical detail in the description of the deer's death; the writing concentrates on the relationship of the boy with his deer, and emotional tension is derived from the reader's identification with Jody. In the passage from *Sounder*, the violence is described in some detail and almost from the point of view of bystander. The reader has time to assimilate feeling about the scene and to respond with the emotions that the writer wished to evoke – shock, grief, indignation, and frustration in the face of personal helplessness.

Children reading these junior novels may draw parallels between aggression in books and violence in real life. They also may be helped thereby to tolerate, or to understand, conditions in their lives. Therefore, the advent of more realism in children's books is heralded. There is an opinion that junior novels about the ills of society and the problems of youth can help to bridge a much-discussed generation gap. Books can be a means of helping young people overcome feelings of alienation.

Thus, these novels about subjects of real concern to adolescents are promoted as being both interesting to the age group and therapeutic in nature. The therapy is generally thought to depend upon catharsis, in literary terms, the purification of emotions through a purging drama. Deriving from Aristotle's *Poetics*, literary catharsis has been modified to mean the exercise of those feelings that enable a person to respond morally to occasions of dramatic intensity. Destructive emotions of low or brutal origin are presumed purged by the stimulus of higher emotions such as pity or fear, or by constructive acts of compassion, charity, or love. By extension, in the bibliotherapeutic view of the use of books, these constructive emotions involve a growth in personal development, an understanding of others or self, or an act of self-governance or self-help.

The theory of catharsis has given protection to much portrayal of violence in traditional arts. The assurance of social or religious usefulness has excused the presence of violence in portrayals of a saint's martyrdom in religious paintings above altars, or of western gunslingers' shoot-outs in books and films. However, while the secular art may be as iconographical as the religious art in its presentation, it is not as protected by cultural tradition. This lack of protection and the emergence of the mass media have focused attention on the presence of violence and the nature of catharsis. The theory of catharsis has come under serious attack, and has been discredited as a beneficial effect of viewing violence on film. Catharsis in literature, or rather the bibliotherapeutic view of the realistic novel, is still widely accepted in publishing for adolescents. The belief in the utility of a contemporary plot about a "real-life" situation accounts for the

sometimes uncritical acceptance of junior novels.

Literary or artistic qualities of style or presentation are subordinated to the plot.<sup>7</sup> Violence as a reflection of life and as catharsis is admitted widely into literature for children and adolescents.

## Chapter Eight

# Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be fairly stated that violence has an appeal for children, and there is much in their environment that nurtures their interest. Children's literature contributes to that interest, although its contribution is variable as to quantity and quality of violence portrayed. A surprising amount of violent activity is present in literature for the nursery and for the young child who emerges from his crib into the world of fairy and folk tale. This literature for young children does have its violence securely anchored within a context of the imaginary and magical world of fantasy.

The violence is in exaggerated speech or retributive justice; it is rarely callous or disaffected. It is grounded in fantasy, and its physical description cannot be confused with normal events in everyday life. Latent violence and hostile innuendoes may, as some folklorists and psychologists assert, appeal to the subconscious, but the appeal is not explicit and cannot be recognized by children. The interpretation of allegory and symbolism is far beyond the sophistication of young readers, who accept the stories at their surface value of "make-believe". It would be difficult to ascertain the harm that the violence in these fantasies may do. It has been argued that a positive good frequently results from a knowledge of these tales. The violence is a small part of the overall contribution that nursery literature makes to the aesthetic, moral, and intellectual development of the child.

Violence in the literature of childhood becomes more questionable in the formative years of early schooling, when the children turn to comic books, realistic novels, and the popular culture as their literary pursuits. Children demonstrate an appetite for violence in the stories and jokes they tell each other, and in their language and reading preferences. They also demonstrate an appetite for the poor and mediocre literature that frequently employs violence as a device. The appetite for poor-quality literature and for violence is encouraged by television. It is the most accessible cultural product to children, and possibly the medium to which most attention has been directed in the presentations to The Royal Commission on Violence in the

Communications Industry. The appetite for violence is also encouraged by the print media that promote popular culture through advertisement of entertainments or through sensationalism in news reporting.

Many people today are concerned that the media of popular culture are saturating the social climate with violence and its concomitant areas of obscenity and pornography. Without suggesting that censorship is the answer, it does seem that some self-restraint is indicated. One theoretical argument for censorship is that democracy, more than any other form of government, depends upon the restraint of the persons involved in self-governance. Whatever contributes to the loss of self-restraint leads to a breakdown in obedience to the rules whereby a people collectively govern themselves, and paves the way for either an anarchical or a more totalitarian regime. As the popular culture informs the reactions of many persons, laws governing public amusements may be of utilitarian value to society. Aside from this utilitarian value, there is an ethical value involved in dealing with the issue of the presentation of violence. It can surely be agreed that the communications industry should exhibit, to some degree, a responsibility towards society's educative goals for its children.

The goals change. A clear indication of society's interest in the education of children can be seen by studying the literature of children from generations past. At present, however, the value goals that society would wish to inculcate in children would be self-restraint, respect for individuals, and a sense of social responsibility. All of these goals are negated by gratuitous violence.

A certain amount of violence is necessary, either because it mirrors an actual happening and is therefore a realistic and truthful presentation, or because it reflects a psychological truth and is therefore also realistic. Violence is associated with an aggressive drive, and with a need for assertion. In particular, boys show an interest in reading violent material. They feel a need for challenge and adventure, which is interpreted as proving their manliness. In former times, there may have been manual labour at an early age, or the vicissi-

tudes of frontier life, or enlistment in the army, to satisfy a need that is presently fulfilled vicariously through sports, books, and television. Television particularly and books in a less pronounced fashion frequently present adventure or challenge as a drama predicated on aggressive violent activity between individuals. Aggression is a normal drive, necessary for a realistic mastery of life; aggression is something every child is endowed with in varying degrees; the problem is one not of aggression itself, but of restraint and direction.

Literature should help in teaching restraint and direction. Whatever aids in this undertaking should be promoted, and whatever hinders should be – for children – monitored and discouraged. Up to the eighteenth century, literature for children was as violent as literature for adults. No distinction was made between what was suitable for children and what was suitable for adults. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, a separate literature for children had developed and it grew throughout the century. This literature did not reflect reality for a majority of the population; the children who read these books were, to a large extent, sheltered in the emerging middle-class homes. Much of the literature was noticeably non-violent, presuming children to be innocent of violence. Children in the lower classes of England and America still had ready access to a violent literature and a violent way of life. Before the end of the century, the penny dreadfuls and comic papers were flourishing, and their blossom has not yet diminished.

Children are no longer presumed to be innocent, and they can now read a wide range of literature on a multitude of topics. Children's literature, with the exception of comics, is not a transgressor in promoting violence as an appropriate and attractive mode of action. Even the realistic novel, dealing with contemporary issues in adolescent life including the portrayal of violence, tends to depict the violence in diminished quality and quantity, compared with the popular medium of television.

The acceptability of any element, including violence, in literature for children and adolescents is dictated by external forces. This literature is very responsive to the adult view of childhood and adolescence. Currently, there is a permissiveness in the approach to writing for these groups; as that attitude changes – if it does – so will the literature. It should also be noted that the intensive reading of juvenile literature, particularly literature of some difficulty, is essentially a minority pursuit among children and adolescents. It would therefore seem more profitable to address the extent of the permissiveness that allows the expression of violence in the more popular media of the communications industry. For its expression here creates or encourages a fashion in books.

As to the violence in the wide range of juvenile literature, one can only recommend that children and adoles-

cents be encouraged to read more widely than within the narrow range of sub-literature – comics, television spinoffs, mediocre pulps – that so frequently uses violence as a ploy. How to encourage wider selection is a problem for education. The presentation of literature requires informed guidance on the part of parents, educators, and all those concerned with the development of children. Possibly the communications industry which exacerbates the problem can also help to alleviate it by educating adults and children, and by presenting alternatives that are less dependent on violence for a central interest.

It may be the function of government and citizenry to aid in investigating the avenues that allow for such development. It is not novel to remark that children are our greatest natural resource. Logan Pearsall Smith once observed that uncultivated minds, unlike uncultivated fields, are not full of wild flowers. Villainous weeds grow in them and they are the haunt of toads.

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### Chapter Four

1. Reform of nursery rhymes has been called for in the past because of their nonsense, vulgarities, and the cruelties they encourage children to practise. George Withers (1588-1667) is possibly the first recorded advocate of nursery-rhyme reform. The influential Sarah Trimmer, early nineteenth century author of children's books and founder of a magazine, *The Guardian of Education*, roundly attacked the uselessness and confused notions of nursery rhymes. Many rhymes were bowdlerized, and many have changed over time in any case. In this century, the issue appears to have arisen in the late 1940s when Geoffrey Hall and Geoffrey Handley-Taylor wrote against use of the verses.
2. Modern illustrated versions always picture Humpty Dumpty as an egg, so the implied riddle of the verse is foretold. Hence it is easy to overlook the riddling aspect of the verse. Psychologists investigating this rhyme suggest that the fragility of the egg is juxtaposed, by children, with their own fragility. Both egg and child are threatened by permanent damage through the fall.
3. In a forthcoming (1977) study for Statistics Canada, Norman Bell, sociologist at the University of Toronto, found that 45 per cent of murders in Canada were within the family unit. In Canada, murder is a minor statistic, showing a slight increase from the period 1961 to 1974. Males are more murderous than females; Bell speculates that this is because of role stereotyping that begins to teach aggression in childhood.

Males may show a proclivity for murder as early as age six. The exception to this pattern occurs in parents, where children are more often victims of a mother's action. Reported in "Research News," *University of Toronto Bulletin*, Nov. 10, 1976.

4. C.W. Valentine, "Innate and Acquired," in *The Normal Child*, (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1956).

5. A simpler explanation for the action in the rhyme is that the verses are meant as swinging games played with babies, and not as lullabies. Another rhyme has "baby swung up high, in an apple tree, when the apples fall, down comes baby, apples and all". It is common for babies to be swung to various rhymes.

6. G. Handley-Taylor, "Nursery Rhyme Reform" (Manchester: True Aim Press, n.d.), pamphlet.

7. Philippe de Ariès, in his *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage, 1972), documents the callousness induced in parents by the high infant-mortality rate of the middle ages.

8. It has been stated by K.E. Thomas, in *The Real Personages of Mother Goose*, (Boston: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1930), that the old man was Cardinal David Beaton (1494-1546), Chancellor under Mary, Queen of Scots, and enemy of English Protestants. He opposed the reform doctrines of the Covenanters, and in 1545, condemned George Wishart, Protestant martyr, to be burned. Beaton was stabbed by Wishart's friends and his body was impaled on the stakes of his castle at St Andrew's, Scotland. In this case, if the connections with the nursery rhyme be accepted, the rhyme actually disguises the violence surrounding the circumstances of Beaton's murder.

Thomas' book gives historical placement to several of the violent rhymes, as well as to the rhymes that are interpreted as ridicule. This last category is the one with the most entries.

9. Both the 1715 edition and a popular illustrated edition of the 1840s are available in a facsimile reprint, together with notes and appendices, in the Juvenile Library Series, *Divine Songs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

The publication of *Divine Songs* was coincident with two other works, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), both of which rapidly became children's classics.

10. The place of Isaac Watts is discussed in F.J. Harvey Darton's work, *Children's Books in England*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), *passim*.

11. A variant beginning to "Rock-a-bye Baby" is "Hush-a-bye Baby" which may be a corruption of the French, "Hé bas, là le loup," – "Be quiet, there's the wolf." This was a threat used to quiet French children, because wolves were reputed to eat naughty children.

12. D. Bakan, *Slaughter of the Innocents: A Study of the Battered Child Phenomenon* (Toronto: CBC Learning Systems, 1971).

This study includes a brief chapter, "What is revealed unto babes", that discusses the hidden portents of some nursery rhymes.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, p.60.

15. There is good factual support for the normality of whippings and beatings in schools of the nineteenth century, and presumably centuries earlier. Nineteenth-century fiction

fastened upon the subject, with Dickens in *David Copperfield* and other writings perhaps taking the lead.

## Chapter Five

1. As quoted in F.J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p.96.
2. The frontispiece showed an old woman telling tales to three people beneath a placard stating "Contes de ma mère l'oye". Published in England in 1729, this work and other books like it became known as "Mother Goose's Tales."
3. Eight tales were in Perrault's 1697 volume; seven are universally recognized:
  - La belle au bois dormant* – (Sleeping Beauty)
  - Le petit chaperon rouge* – (Red Riding Hood)
  - La barbe bleue* – (Blue Beard)
  - Le maistre chat* – (Puss in Boots)
  - Les fées* – (The Fairies, or Diamonds and Toads)
  - Cendrillon* – (Cinderella)
  - Riquet à la houppe* (variant titles, a deformed prince loves a beautiful but witless princess)
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6. Department of Education, *The Ontario Readers: Second Book* (Toronto: T. Eaton Co., 1935), p. 29. Authorized text, 1923 - 1937.
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8. Jella Lepman, *A Bridge of Children's Books* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969), p. 59. A translation from the German, *Die Kinderbuchbrücke*.
9. F.J.H. Darton, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
10. E. Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
11. Kathleen Hines, ed., *The Babes in the Wood* (London: The Bodley Head, 1972), Afterword.
12. Most versions contain a later interpolation telling how the murder was avenged and the wicked uncle ruined. The moral is pointed: those in charge of infants should yield them their right – in this case, a patrimony. The final exhortation is not to be kind but to be just in execution of financial affairs.
13. A brief history of "Jack the Giant-killer", quoting the interest of the Fieldings, Johnson and Cowper appears in *Classic Fairy Tales*, Peter and Iona Opie, eds. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 49-50.
14. As most students of Shakespeare know, the nursery lines "Fee Fi Fau Fum" appear in *King Lear* (Act III, Scene iv).
15. The incidence of wicked stepmothers as against wicked stepfathers has been remarked. Psychological reasoning suggests that stepmother is a displacement for mother, and that an Electra complex underlies much of the hostility direct toward stepmothers. The fact that females, more often than males, tell the stories to children ensures that the feminine interest eventually dominates the fairy tale.
16. A full text of the tale may be found in Joseph Jacobs, *English Fairy Tales* (London: The Bodley Head, 1968), pp. 92-94.

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*Rosemary's Baby* (New York: Random House, 1967) a best-selling novel by Ira Levin, made into a motion picture and reprinted for paper sales in 1976, shared elements from the fairy tale of Tom Tit Tot. Rosemary saves her baby by naming the sorcerer, thus freeing both herself and baby.

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22. Charles Keeping, "Illustration in Children's Books," in *Children's Literature in Education*, I(March 8 1970): 41-54.

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5. Science fiction, a genre not considered in this survey, is frequently concerned with the conditioning of people to

callous responses. The plot may be centred on invasion, or interplanetary war or some such. The quality of violence and its uses follows a similar pattern in the fantasies of tomorrow as in the realistic novels of today.

6. The reading of an historical account of the German Third Reich is popular among adolescent boys. Biographies of Hitler, whether ill or well received by the critics, whether slim and fictionalized or scholarly and thick, are popular with adults and adolescents. As this paper is presented to The Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry, a new book, *Adolf Hitler* (Doubleday, 1976) by John Toland, is a current best-seller.
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Giblin, editor-in-chief of juvenile books at The Seabury Press discusses the problem of editing violent incidents in children's books. He asserts that problems arise not because of content but because of the author's treatment.

## Acknowledgements

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(Acknowledgements are in order of appearance of items in text.)

*The English Struwwelpeter, or Pretty Stories and Funny Pictures for Little Children*, by Heinrich Hoffmann, c. 1860

*Max und Moritz*, by Wilhelm Busch, c. 1865

*Jack the Giant-killer*, chapbook, c. 1830

Illustration by Edward Ardizzone from *The Old Ballad of the Babes in the Wood*

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Illustration by Arthur Rackham from "Hop-o'-my-thumb", *The Arthur Rackham Fairy Book*

"Cronus" by Charles Keeping from *The God Beneath the Sea* by Leon Garfield and Edward Blishen

"Prometheus" by Charles Keeping from *The God Beneath the Sea* by Leon Garfield and Edward Blishen

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*No Kiss for Mother* by Tomi Ungerer

*The Bear and the Fly* by Paula Winter

# Magazines and Violence

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## Preface: The Method

In the following pages we offer a research essay rather than a social science report. Magazine content analysis may be placed in either category, of course, or somewhere in between. The method usually adopted in media studies within social science is to survey every *n*th issue of the magazines under review, use some quantitative measure, and then emerge with data that might or might not have some significance. A hypothesis such as the degree of violence in magazines may be proved, disproved, or unproved. The question of quality is not considered. There is no reference to aspects outside the disciplines of sociology, psychology, or other sciences, and certainly not to literature, philosophy, history, or personal experience.

The study herewith is not of that nature. It does involve a bit of the writer's experience as a former magazine writer, but more importantly attempts to range through many "disciplines" as they serve the needs of the subject and to consider anything that "swims into our ken" as media watchers. It also includes some paragraphs from lectures past in journalism, communication, and mass media. To get as wide and as recent a spectrum as possible, magazines were selected casually in several fields from the first half of 1976 and with no particular selection principle.

For help in the reading and annotation I wish to thank Al Baker, York University graduate student. It is a subjective essay as all essays are.

Earle Beattie

## Chapter One

# The Corporate Economy

The magazine industry must be seen in the light of the larger world of mass media around it and the still larger one around that which is the corporate economy, liberalism, and democracy. It is, therefore, a part of any violence that exists in the environment. Any changes that are suggested must take this into account along with traditions that have guarded freedom of the press but have just as often seen it regarded as a publisher's licence to do as he pleases.

In Robert Stein's view, "Democracy gives us the freedom to be degraded or turn away."<sup>1</sup>

The question of censorship is not whether to censor or not to censor, it is question of where, when, and who, as we have always had censors. Every media office has its own "internal censors", known as "Gatekeepers" in media studies. They decide what shall pass or not pass and to what extent. They set the agenda for the reading, listening, and viewing publics. When something is withheld, very often it is not known to exist. Nor has the State been ruled out of any say in the process to make way for the private owners and media workers. It has had a necessary role and the problem here too is not State or No State, but how much State and in what way. More importantly, non-official, consumer, public accountability is now being sought.

The problem must be seen also in the light of increasing concentration within the mass media, leading to mergers, combinations, mixed-media holdings, and the embedding of media in industrial conglomerates. Violence in or by media has this as backdrop.

Some indication of size in media holdings may be gained by looking first at Time, Inc. Its statement in the December 1976 issue of *Fortune* announced that the corporation was "rapidly approaching its first billion-dollar year." That referred to total revenues. The net income for the third quarter was up by some 50 per cent to \$12,523,000 while earnings for the nine months rose to \$43,258,000. While Time, Inc., was built on the magazine of that name it is no longer confined to magazines alone, and this revenue includes books, other publishing, and forest products.<sup>2</sup>

In Canada, the largest magazine publisher, Maclean-Hunter had sales in 1975 amounting to \$151.6 million.

But besides consumer and trade magazines that figure included printing, books, radio stations, cable companies, television companies, production of shows, exhibitions, and electronic equipment in several countries of the world.

Southam Press, Ltd., owns 17 daily newspapers, 46 business publications, and 40 other publications plus other properties including a recently-acquired interest in *TV Guide*.

Southam and *The Toronto Star* through a subsidiary called Southstar own the newspaper magazine supplements *The Canadian* and *Canadian Homes*. Free Press Publications owns *Weekend* and *Perspectives*, rival supplements to Southstar's.

In 1975, *Canadian Advertising Rates and Data* listed 156 consumer magazines in Canada with a total distribution of 16.2 million copies, and there are about 85 other magazines that do not report to CARD. They are divided between two Associations: The Magazine Association of Canada, representing 15 of the largest paid-circulation magazines, and the Canadian Periodical Publishers Association, founded with ten members and now representing 128 magazines. The highest average revenue per issue of any magazine in Canada in 1975 was *Chatelaine's*, with a gross of \$660,000 per issue.<sup>3</sup>

The most notable magazine-publishing achievement of recent years was the conversion on October 6, 1975, of the long-standing general magazine *Maclean's* to a newsmagazine to be published 26 times a year. It arrived with 124 pages, including the covers, of which 58 per cent were advertising. (That compared with *Newsweek's* 104 pages and *Time's* 108.) The passing by the federal government of Bill C-58, which removed Canadian status from *Time* in the Income Tax Act, made it possible for *Maclean's* to garner more ads and publish in the more expensive news form.

Although, as we show elsewhere in this paper, *Maclean's* as a news magazine published some violent covers in the first part of 1976, it was peaceful in this first issue. There was some fascination with machination à la *Time* when, in three pages on the World, we heard about miniature metal detectors to be used by the U.S.

secret service to find the guns around Ford, but that looked more like a filler than anything and the magazine was more saccharine than violent. This issue ended with the fairy-tale about Carole Taylor of *ctv*, and her Prince Charming, the millionaire mayor of Vancouver.<sup>4</sup>

*Toronto Life* became a popular magazine in 1975 and surprised many in the magazine world by passing the 50,000 mark. The same company commenced publishing a juvenile magazine called *Owl* which attained considerable success. *Saturday Night*, which suffered a hiatus for several months starting in 1974, came back to life again in 1975; it is now close to 100,000 circulation. Two "controlled-circulation" (free-distribution) magazines proved financially successful: *Homemaker's* with 1,232,000 circulation in English reaching some 32 cities ( *Madame Au Foyer* in French), and *Quest*, circulating in about 20 cities. Both are published by Comac Communications, a subsidiary of *The Toronto Star*. As a result some strong criticisms of the "free" magazine development are being heard in the magazine industry, which has traditionally asked people to pay for their magazines.

Another free magazine, *Calendar*, began in Toronto in 1969 and has since been publishing in Montreal and Vancouver. This kind of freebie magazine, which gets circulation quickly in order to get advertising where the money is, includes another new one, the *Financial Post Magazine*. It goes out to 23,000 doctors' offices and is inserted in the *Financial Post* newspaper.<sup>5</sup> From the above it would seem that Canadian magazines are now staging something of a renaissance, but total circulation relative to U.S. magazine distribution is small and problems with U.S.-owned news-stands have been monumental.

The trade magazines are generally very profitable, taking in about \$42 million in advertising revenue in 1975, and here again there is free distribution with some exceptions. According to the *Financial Post* there are more than 60 groups across the country operating two or more periodicals. Total revenue from the Maclean-Hunter Business Publications division was some \$21 million.<sup>6</sup>

# The Advertising Context of the Mainline Commercial Magazine

In July 1968 that massive Middle American magazine, *The Saturday Evening Post*, carried out a manoeuvre that was so revolutionary in the history of magazines that it served to define in one stroke the whole meaning of mass media: it discarded three and a half million subscribers. For the purpose of this essay, this action sets the question of vicarious violence in its appropriate context: that of the modern industrial state in which people become consumers, rather than persons.

The *Post*'s seemingly incomprehensible act cut its circulation from six and a half million subscribers to three million. A computer, programmed on a demographic basis, provided a print-out of the new list. If you were a *Post* subscriber receiving the magazine in your rural-route box near Pumpkin Junction, a living exemplar of the Norman Rockwell "just folks" image exploited by the *Post* so long, you were peremptorily expendable. In the inexorable logic of the computer, the publisher himself was struck off the delivery system; he too lived on a rural road. In pop-cultural shock, you may have been like the man in Lobo, Ontario, near London, who felt so deprived of this journalistic sustenance that he got a newspaper ombudsman-type columnist to get his subscription restored. The delivery was re-started on February 8, 1969, the day the *Post* collapsed.

Or as a *Post* subscriber you might have been that apocryphal little old lady in running shoes who celebrated her 75th birthday in a Manhattan flat, but despite her sophisticated urban environment found herself *Post*-less just the same. With her, it was age and perhaps income. To qualify as one of the Chosen Computer People you had to fit the demographic model programmed for the ideal *Post* reader which could be profiled as "youngish, living in an urban area and having a good income." In short, as a subscriber you had to be in a position to buy some of the goods being advertised in the magazine. The message was clear and it cut beneath all the cant of the "dear reader" fiction so long promoted by mass media editors: "Goodbye, you're a nuisance to us, dear reader, because you don't buy the goods advertised in our magazine and it costs us money to send it to you."

Now, the reader stood suddenly stripped in the glaring light of reality: he was not a person, but a consumer in a consumer society. (Money was not automatically refunded; his subscription was sent to another magazine.) To many a reader the blow was sharp, for had he not been reinforced and indulged over the years with the narcissistic image of *Post* stories that he was Captain America himself, a homespun rugged individual, a cowboy at heart, descendant of bluff New England seamen, the salt of the earth, and above all, Needed. Not a person to be cast off, let alone sold slave-like to another publication he hadn't ordered.

Adding insult to injury of the old readers, Bill Emerson, the *Post*'s final editor, rationalized it all this way: "We are editing for more urban, sophisticated and better-educated readers . . . now we can be blunter, hit harder, make more demands." An admission surely that they had pulled their punches for those sterling readers who were, despite their long-portrayed ruggedness, not able to take it. The flattering reflection of themselves was gone; in fact, now they were being called rural ignoramuses.

The real reason for throwing over those three and a half million readers was not that the *Post*, in a spirit of enlightenment, wanted to speak up boldly on social issues but that it wanted what advertisers call a "target audience." The metropolis with its *Playboy*, *Playgirl*, and *Cosmopolitan* boys and girls, nicely packaged in high-rises, its young marrieds in split-levels and families in townhouses, the jet-set, the Pop Art people, the Pepsi generation, were easy spendthrifts and easy to reach. Advertisers could aim accurately at them as targets; they were concentrated, densely packed, new entrants into the market with standardized and known needs – in a word, consumers.

Contrarily, the subscribers in the villages, in the small towns, and on the country roads were widely dispersed, with varying tastes, and, growing old, were not as consumption-minded. So it was out with the Troglodytes, in with the McLuhanites.

Obviously, the Name of the Game is not investigative journalism as portrayed on the television series of that name, but Advertising. Its domination is so great that

even expert media men said that the *Post* failed because its readers went thataway. In the *Post's* case it was clearly the advertisers who left – at least in terms of what might have been without television and competition from slicker, more sophisticated and specialized magazines.

From 1961 to 1969 the publishing company, Curtis, had a reported loss of \$62 million from its magazines, most of it attributed to the *Post*. In 1968 the *Post* lost \$5 million according to *Newsweek* of January 20, 1969.

"There is no question that Madison Avenue lost faith in the *Post*. Advertising pages last year numbered 904 compared with 4,425 in 1950," *Newsweek* reported. Its opinion was that the Curtis company failed to diversify like other print-media companies, who were going into broadcasting and other ventures. It turned down opportunities to buy CBS and ABC and preferred to remain an integrated publishing company that started out with forest reserves and a paper mill. In other words, it would not regard its magazines as parts of a conglomerate or even a mixed-media empire as the trend is today.

The *Post's* big following was, like so many magazines in the United States, built on the same kind of policies that made Luce and DeWitt Wallace rich and powerful. *Newsweek*, cited above, about summarized it thus:

It preached conservative Republicanism, extolled big business, castigated Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and in the process became remarkably wealthy . . . Every Thursday the great middle class curled up with the *Post* to follow the adventures of Mr. Moto, Alexander Botts and Clarence Budington Kelland's hero Scattergood Baines . . . and to be comforted by the covers of Norman Rockwell. Rockwell's paintings were supposed to mirror the America that read the *Post*. But more and more the reality wasn't there any more – if it ever was . . . America was going urban and was mesmerized by TV. Millions of former general-magazine readers now read only the TV listings regularly. [Similarly] television delivered the coup de grace to *Collier's* in 1956 . . .!

Still, it is incredible that six and a half million people want a magazine and that isn't enough to finance it. Obviously, magazines, like other mass media, are now totally dependent on advertising. The advertising camel who tentatively put his head into the Arab's tent a century ago has now taken over the tent. Advertising was a reluctantly accepted guest in the early magazines, but increasingly welcome as it began to pay most of the bills; and it did make many magazines independent of other patrons. Unfortunately, the subscriber's money accounted for a smaller and smaller proportion, and so a new dependency on business and its advertising agencies developed. Readers were actually not charged enough for their magazines and like the listeners and viewers of the electronic media came to regard media cheaply. In some cases they were "free". But the fact is that the subscriber actually pays the whole price as the cost of the advertising is part of the price of the goods that he buys.

It is often said by people in the media industries that

advertising does not "influence" editorial content. However it is more than mere influence that occurs. It is life and death. Advertising calls the shots on whether a magazine should live, die, go into limbo as *Saturday Night* did for upwards of a year, or resurrect as *The Saturday Evening Post* did in a new, nostalgic monthly form. Advertising revenue is now the life-blood of publication as it is of all mass media. From the days when advertising made the penny press possible to the present, advertising has gradually dominated media, big and small. In daily newspaper and magazine offices, the layout sheets arrive with the advertising blocked in first; the editorial material (news, features, articles) is then filled into the spaces between the ads. (There are, of course, a few reservations where ads cannot go, but very few, and the increasing appearance of ads at various junctures of the articles, including the right-hand or facing pages, make editorial layout a mockery for many magazines.)

In brief, public information, editorial comment, public opinion, and entertainment are now largely dependent on the wishes of companies and government advertising departments or their ad agencies, in some cases on the vulgar irrelevancy of a deodorant for underarm odour. We would call this "doing violence" to the entire democratic ideal. Indeed the whole decision-making process in public information rests on chance ownerships and media "gatekeepers" who have no public accountability, and on many who do not even have training. (Journalism is not a profession in Canada.)

The problem of violence in the media must be seen in this context as it is part of the problem of accountability generally. Most "press councils," such as the Ontario Press Council, are not independent accountability bodies, being controlled by the media themselves. There is obviously a need for an independent national media council or press council as recommended by Senator Keith Davey in the report of the Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media.<sup>2</sup>

For some *The Saturday Evening Post* in its business chauvinism was better dead than read, but its disappearance and the near-collapse of other magazines such as *Saturday Night* open vitally important questions on ownership, control, and decision-making in the mass media. Advertising may terminate many media by its absence, but it can hurt also by its presence. One perceptive writer, Marya Manines, appears like a prophet now when we look back at what she said in 1962. Commenting on "the prices we pay for our newsprint, our television, our information and entertainment," she wrote:

It is a question which our mass magazines in particular had better ask themselves and which this particular reader suspects is at the root of their troubles . . . In their ferocious competition for advertising space, they may find themselves gaining revenue but losing readers. Can you be equally magazine and market, or is there a point at which the market is more than the magazine?<sup>3</sup>

She noted that advertising intrudes at every point in a person's life. It becomes a kind of psychopathology of everyday life, to use Freud's title: billboards sharing the presence of trees, electric signs that dim the stars in a city, beer-jingle commercials; and, as she observes:

... the readers of tabloids turn over twelve pages of merchandise to find one paragraph of print.<sup>4</sup>

Ms. Mannes surveyed *Life*, *Look*, and *The Saturday Evening Post* for their mix of ads and editorial material, all of which have ceased publication since she wrote. She found that *Life*'s ad-editorial ration had risen from six per cent in 1937 to 50 per cent in 1962, and just to confirm her forecast that ad intrusions were violating reading space, *The Reporter* magazine in which her article appeared, was soon to collapse.

I started this examination with an issue that appeared during the first year of *Life*'s existence on January 4, 1937. It contained sixty-eight pages, of which fifty-nine were editorial. The body of the magazine consisted of forty-nine editorial pages without any advertising whatsoever, the subjects being the Netherlands royal family, sports, racing, the Metropolitan Opera opening, the Roosevelt administration (sixteen pages), Maillol, the Camera Overseas, Ribbentrop, the French and Germans, the Cubans and the Danes . . . By the end of 1937, *Life* had a circulation of 1,384,000 and an advertising revenue of some \$4.4 million. Twenty-four years later, by the end of 1961, *Life*'s circulation had risen to nearly seven million copies, its advertising revenue to over \$138 million. The formula that originated this revolution in publishing would have seemed, therefore, to work. Yet it has not worked for me . . . In other random issues during the last ten years we have Isaac Stern and Leonard Bernstein wedged between Borden's cow Elsie and a little girl using a Sylvania iron, a full-page Tareyton color ad facing the crash of a DC 8 jet, and a photograph of Pasternak's funeral, with his beloved Olga kissing the poet's dead brow, facing an ad for the Commercial Banks, U.S., in which a fellow is hamming in amateur theatricals. A magnificent full-page photograph of Etruscan tomb figures faces a cola-and-rum ad; a subtle and lovely Degas-like color photograph of a ballet is nullified by a full-page bowl of tomato soup. James Agee is sandwiched between Falling Hair, Tums, and Choco Cherry Spumoni; Sir Charles Snow is squeezed between constipation and valentines, Professor Tizard between colored fruits and glue. Hurricane waves lashing at a Texas tower, which they ultimately destroyed along with its crew, compete for attention with a smiling full-page goddess in Formfit girdle and bra . . . Again, these grotesque distractions are not confined to *Life*. *Look*, its closest rival, is sometimes as much of a hedgepodge, a supermarket in which a shelf of information, news, or sports is alternated with soups, dog food, cars, cigarettes and beer . . . Besides giving its readers such quantities of facts, *Life* taught them how to think, how to react, and how to vote, handing down a steady barrage of editorial counsel on political matters, national and international, and on cultural and moral problems of the day . . . Can a magazine have its cake and eat it too? . . . It is the stated high purpose, the presumption of a magazine to educate its readers, that makes its truckling to the advertisers open to the sharpest questioning. If the supermarket is the victor, the reader is the victim. And once he is aware of that, the mass magazine is in trouble.<sup>5</sup>

In the author's view, then, *Time*, *Look*, and other

general-circulation magazines suffered, not from a lack of readers who wanted to buy the magazines, but from two things: (1) the quantity and quality of advertising – in this it was not only the bad taste and clutter of the ads, but the choking surfeit of them; (2) in the case of *Life*, it was becoming a missionary, a cold-war warrior of the most negative, necrophiliac type. Increasingly, and boringly, this dour world-end script was added to the picture, and like advertising it became a partner in domination. America was just not that interested in shrill proselytizing.

Television came along, of course, and a third reason for magazine demise can be advanced which is borne out by the figures. More and more advertising switched over to the new medium. Moving pictures on the small screen right in your living-room were now more exciting than still pictures in a magazine, although the advertising, equally interruptive and even more banal, was there. It is possible, therefore, that television's greed for higher and higher dividends through ad-clutter will have lethal results. *The Globe and Mail* business section of January 8, 1977, despite its newspaper advertising bias, headlines a story by William J. Thompson: "Marketing for consumers. TV advertising industry destroying its own credibility."

The author writes:

The television advertising industry in Canada, in fact in North America, appears bent on something approaching suicide . . . In a recent address to the Montreal Advertising and Sales Club, Robert Miller (a former advertising executive) . . . points out that the way we interrupt TV with commercials these days is a disgrace. The unbelievable arrogance with which consumers are treated by those responsible for commercials which are silly and insulting in mind-boggling proportions is equally disgraceful.<sup>6</sup>

Newspapers and magazines, of course, share the self-serving myth that advertising in papers or magazines does not interrupt. Those who start to read articles or stories in any publication know differently. They are forced from Page One in a newspaper to jump over to an inside page to finish reading a news story and then have to go back to Page One again to start another, *ad infinitum*, in a steeplechase through the paper with the ads as hurdles that they presumably can't miss. Magazines similarly propel the reader from the front of the "book" to pages in the middle and back so that he or she will stumble in serendipity fashion on the ads.

It is not that all advertising should be eliminated from mass media. Some media have served well as a marketplace for goods, as well as ideas, but not in that volume with that financial and social cost, that pounding repetition, that clutter, bad taste, misinformation, seduction of the child, wastage in absorption of human and natural resources, and that premium to big corporations over small companies in hawking brand names of no superior merit because advertising is expensive. It becomes a dominating force, an immovable object with violence being done to the whole classic liberal ideal

that truth will arise through competing ideas. Today, chain journalism and media conglomerates simply mean that business ideology receives prominence. Magazine publishing in the main has become big business and a part of national or even multinational corporatism.

*The Globe and Mail* business page cited above also announced under the head “International Company News” that “cbs buys publishing firm for \$50 million.” The company it acquired was Fawcett Publications, Inc. A privately held publishing house established in 1919, with revenue of some \$135 million in 1976, it publishes *Women’s Day*, with a circulation of eight million, *Mechanix Illustrated*, *Rudder*, an old boating magazine, 30 other special-interest magazines, and mass-market paperback books sold under the Crest and Gold Medal imprints.

In the same issue, we read how “Murdoch wins control of magazine group.” It says “Australian publisher Rupert Murdoch has won control of the New York Magazine group after one of the bitterest executive suite battles seen in the United States in years.”

The small cultural products of the past, produced by individuals in a personal way who were primarily interested in ideas, have given way to industrialization and become “commodities” that are bought and sold for capital gain or profit with little thought of quality. For that, big audiences must be made bigger to attract more advertising and lowest common denominator values, including a Roman arena of violence.

The final days of the *Post*’s existence were like a corporate jungle, according to one of its chroniclers, Otto Friedrich, who was editor from 1965 to the end. William French reviewed his book, *Decline and Fall*, in the July 4, 1970, issue of *The Globe Magazine* (since collapsed to make way for the standardized supplement *Weekend*.) He tells how Friedrich left *Newsweek* to get away from office politics:

Little did he know he was walking right into the biggest show in the Corporate Coliseum with the lions and the Christians slavering to get at each other . . . *Decline and Fall* is not so much about magazine journalism – although there is a good deal of that – but about corporate cannibalism and the flaws of the free enterprise system . . . Friedrich concluded: “There is something essentially wrong with an economic and social system that is based so solidly on the instincts of greed and aggression . . . [It] is a system that is fundamentally indifferent to the requirements in civilized life.”

The modern industrial state with its various models of violence may partly explain mass media violence.

## Chapter Three

# What are Magazines?

Let us start at Square One with the question: What are magazines?

Magazines as constituted today are print and picture packages of information that usually include advertising, opinions, and, in some cases, creative expression, such as fiction and poetry; they are issued periodically, where the period is more than a day but less than six months. Thus an annual or a semi-annual publication ordinarily is not called a magazine. A magazine must also be distinguished from a journal, a term usually reserved for a specialized monthly or quarterly publication devoted to an academic discipline or a profession, though some newspapers and some magazines still use it, e.g. *Ottawa Journal*, *Ladies Home Journal*. (In point of etymology, "journal" derives from the French and means "daily." It really belongs more to the daily newspaper than to other publications.)

"Magazine," as we point out in a brief comment elsewhere on history, comes from the French word *magasin*, "store." Unlike the specialized journal, which attempts in-depth treatment of subjects, the magazine is a variety or general store for tastes of many people, a casual and popular emporium for the layman. For all that distinction, it will be seen that the general magazine (*Saturday Evening Post*, the old *Maclean's*, *Life*, *Collier's*) has almost gone the way of the old general store. It is being replaced by the "shop" or boutique, catering to special interests and levels in relation to class, income, sex, cognitions, though more facets are presented than in the specialist journal.

The daily issue of information constitutes a newspaper, a bulletin, a newsletter. These terms are also used, of course, for less frequent publication of news: tri-weekly, semi-weekly, and weekly. Frequency of issue, however, is not the only criterion for defining a magazine. Form is important, insofar as magazines attempt to be less formal than journals and more formal, less expendable, than newspapers through various printing and graphic techniques that usually include paper of better quality than newsprint (though not necessarily as in the case of some small-circulation magazines) and more attention to binding, layout, and design. The use of colour, art work, photography, and

decorative forms of illustration also characterize many magazines.

Style of writing is an important aspect and, generally speaking, the magazine article makes use of a patterned, more individualistic style with identification of the writer as compared with the newspaper where most news stories are anonymous and in formula style. Magazine writing is not necessarily writing of higher quality than newspaper writing or other journalism such as news-film scripting. Straight reporting, "background pieces", interpretative writing, columns, and editorials may offer prose that is on a high level, but the magazine piece for thoughtful magazines has greater possibilities for research, reflection, and style because ordinarily there is greater time available for research and writing. Newspapers operate under greater pressure, although newsmagazines find themselves in a last-minute scramble as deadlines approach. Additionally, there is much journalistic updating now in many magazines.

Oliver Clausen, a former *Time* writer, has described the particular pressure in the former Canadian "edition" office:

*Time's* editorial office in Montreal is a pretty light-hearted place. It has to be if only to make up for the notorious pressure under which *Time* is produced. Beer and liquor are stocked in a back room for instant unwinding.<sup>1</sup>

But on the whole the magazine writer is given more time or takes more, especially if he is a freelancer. The author is reminded of an interview many years ago with the late Ian Sclanders, Articles Editor of *Maclean's*, concerning his first freelance article. "When can you turn it in?" Sclanders asked. Hesitating, the author replied, "It will take a couple of months."

"Good," Sclanders said, "that means we will probably get the article," and he explained "I usually get a reply like, 'Will next Thursday be okay?' Then I know he's not a magazine writer."

"Next Thursday" has increasingly become the rule as the longer well-documented article gives way to the short stylistic piece that stays more or less on the surface.

Nevertheless it can be said that the magazine world allows for more perspective than the newspaper world

and operates in the "middle distance." Books normally have been in the "deep distance" by comparison, but today there are so many superficial magazines and so many "instant books" that the old protection of perspective is diminishing.

A continual diet of Lamb's *Essays of Elia* is not advocated, but there must be some room for a Lamb and certainly something short of the violence outlined by William A. Emerson, the final editor of the old *Saturday Evening Post*, who said:

I don't want to stir a tingling sensation in the reader of the *Post* . . . I want to jolt him as with an electric shock. I want my magazine to have an effluvium like St. Elmo's fire: crackling and glowing.<sup>2</sup>

He was speaking to the Annual Luncheon Audience of the Audit Bureau of Circulation in Toronto. The time was October 18, 1967, just two years before the *Post* became extinct like a volcano though it flared up later into a small-circulation nostalgia magazine. Emerson called his talk "Vitality, the Genius of Communication."

The notion of gentleness or calm consideration in magazines as in many novels has vanished, giving place to "realism" and to the "real people," who are said to be fabulous or devastating in print, or cool, sophisticated technocrats.

A hundred years ago exactly, the Canadian magazine *The New Dominion Monthly*, in its January to June Index 1877, included such titles as: "An April Pleasure Sail," "Life on an Indian Reserve," "The Average Man of General Information," and (horrors) "A Carnivorous Plant," by Mrs. Mary Treat.<sup>3</sup>

But in that final issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* on February 8, 1969, the titles were: "School is Bad for Children," "Peace in Vietnam (How do we get out? Three who came home, where do we go from here?)," "The Rebirth of the blues: Soul," "The Second Coming of Synanon," "Anybody Want to Buy Chicago?"

The old kind of elite, literary, nature-loving, history-musing, travel-interest magazine may have been just too reflective and leisured for the frenetic world of the hydrogen bomb, but perhaps for that reason something akin to these calm thoughts is needed. Transcendental meditation and other nerve-relaxing antidotes to modern stress are being followed by millions in the West today while the media pump out their violence. There is even a School for Violence-writing, so to speak, reminiscent of Sheridan's *School for Scandal*. It is called *Writer's Digest*. In the June 1976 issue, the novelist Arthur Hailey is featured on the cover with the blurb, "The bestselling novelist who doesn't sell sex and violence (Well, maybe a little bit)." However, a man in *Airport* wants to blow up a plane, and a gang of criminal avengers in *The Moneychangers* inflict savage cruelty on an embezzler turned informer.

Other writers pick up their cues from *Writer's Digest*: one writer says, "Last September Ace paperbacks

published a western of mine, 'Vengeance Seeker,'" and his story details how,

Placing the Colt on the top of the desk, he closed the drawer, then fitted his hand almost lovingly around the butt . . . Poking the six-gun's barrel well into the wound, Ruel ripped upward. The stitches came out and a dark flood followed after . . . Ruel thrust the barrel into the freshly opened wound and fired. The explosion filled the tiny room with a deafening whomp . . . How many bullets had they sent into that crazy kid? He stirred uneasily at the thought. They'd shot him twice: once in the left shoulder and the second time in the back. That first slug would account for the crooked shoulder, then . . . The multiple viewpoint then is an excellent way to broaden your characterization and keep your reader on top of the action. Why not try it with your next novel and revel in the the range and excitement it adds to your story? . . . (pp. 22-25)

. . . If you are confounded by flat characters, re-examine their anatomy. Give them backbone. You'll see them come alive and grow into scrappy, vibrant, *living* characters. (p. 49)<sup>4</sup>

Hailey sententiously observes:

My books are not loaded with sex . . . Part of this is a personal rebellion against some of the crudity that's written. It becomes a challenge to write a book that's interesting on its own merits and does not rely on sex or violence. Hemingway, Maugham, none of the great writers were crude. I couldn't write a book that relied on sex or violence. If such passages create a market — and I doubt it — it's certainly not the kind of market that interests me.

The interviewer says: "Yet in *The Moneychangers* there is more violence and sex than in any of your previous books. Why?"

Hailey replies that, when he was dining with E.P. Taylor at the Lyford Cay Yacht Club in Nassau, Taylor (now in his seventies) said, "Arthur, I hope you put some sex in your next book." And so, Hailey, thinking that maybe he was getting old, says "I decided to turn Avril loose, who as you know is a beautiful and sophisticated call girl." In this way, E.P. Taylor became a literary adviser over Hemingway and Maugham.<sup>5</sup>

## Chapter Four

# Kinds Of Magazines and Their Audiences

### The Praise of Folly

There are, broadly, two types of magazines: consumer and specialized. The word "consumer" is really a trade name and rather meaningless. It once referred to the large-circulation, general-content national magazine reaching a cross section of readers and carrying advertising for the layman, e.g. everyday products for food, drink, cars, et cetera, but this is now going the way of the dodo. Among Canadian magazines, such a definition has included *Maclean's*, *Chatelaine*, *Le Magazine Maclean*, *Saturday Night*, the two newspaper supplements, *Weekend* and *The Canadian*, and others that have ceased publication. Imports from the United States now number only two of the old-definition consumer magazine, *Time* and *Reader's Digest*, with the latter claiming to be Canadian and allowed to do so legally because of some Canadian content and some Canadian shareholding. U.S. consumer magazines that have gone out of business over the years include *Collier's*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Life*, and *Look*.

As most of the magazine world has become fragmented by specialization in content, a realistic definition has had to broaden the word "consumer." For example, *Miss Chatelaine* is national, but is highly specialized too; so is *Books in Canada*. *Toronto Life*, like *Vancouver Life*, is mainly citybound, but it has all the other qualities of "consumerism." In effect any magazine carrying advertising goes to potential consumers of the goods advertised, including specialized magazines.

In fact many of the latter group are now called "consumer," and a new definition, plus a new name, is called for. The definition would be along this line: A periodical issued at least quarterly that is made generally available to the public. It might well be called a "public magazine."

While *Toronto Life* is not a general-content, national magazine it is available to anyone by subscription and – more relevantly to the definition, on the news-stand in its area.

The question of whether the magazine is provided "free" in some areas (by "controlled distribution," to use the trade term) or only for a subscription is not

being considered at this point. Readers in some areas get *Quest* and *Homemaker's* free; others can get them by subscribing.

The other broad division, "specialized," is reserved for magazines that are generally not on the news-stand and are sent out free or for a subscription, but to such specialized groups as the professions and occupations. Within this specialized sector there are (1) the "trade" magazines, now called "business papers" (both names are undesignative) such as *Canadian Grocer*, *Bus and Truck*, *Home*, which are turned out by publishing firms like Maclean-Hunter and Southam, and (2) the "industrial magazines" which are published by companies, associations and other organizations, e.g. *Imperial Oil Review*, *Hudson's Bay Beaver*, of which there are two types: (a) "external" – sent out to customers, suppliers, government and legislative members, et cetera for public-relations reasons, and (b) "internal" or "house" for employees and other personnel and concerned with staff news, chit-chat, et cetera. Some industrial magazines are both "internal" and "external" in their content. There are a very large number of these industrial magazines in Canada reaching large numbers of people. They need a new name too. Perhaps "private magazines". In addition there are all the magazines received by doctors, lawyers, academicians, other professions and occupations. These are not offered to the public at large. We are not referring here to "journals", discussed elsewhere.

Consumer magazines also have big "audiences" (to use the research term). The total circulation of magazines in Canada belonging to and audited by the Audit Bureau of Circulation was 12,735,060 per issue in 1974, of which U.S. magazines accounted for 9,898,060 and Canadian magazines, 2,837,000.<sup>1</sup> Annual advertising is reported at \$50 million, which is only 11 per cent of the estimated gross advertising revenue for all forms of media in Canada, totalling \$2.3 billion, including outdoor advertising and catalogues.<sup>2</sup>

The circulation of all daily newspapers in Canada (115) is by comparison about five million. Circulation of weeklies, semi-weeklies and tri-weeklies has to be added to that to obtain an estimate of newspaper reading.

As we point out elsewhere in this paper in commenting on advertising, the general magazine like *The Saturday Evening Post* failed, in large part, because advertisers wanted "target audiences," and so audiences have been split into thousands of fragments. Whether the advertisers weaned the big audiences away from the general magazine for their own purposes, or whether the audience interests and cognitions served to instruct publishers on what kind of magazine to produce if they wanted to zero in on particular consumers for particular products is a chicken-and-egg question. But obviously if you want to sell retirement housing in Florida, the magazine *Seventeen* is not your medium. The fact is that *Maclean's* is not your best medium either, as related to cost, because here the relatively high rate includes thousands of readers in their 20s, 30s and 40s who haven't got around to thinking in those terms yet. The older group you want to reach where sales should be higher might well be readers of the magazine *Retirement*, or one for a more exclusive older-age group. And vice-versa for that June 1976 ad in *Seventeen*, "Fantastic Hand-Crocheted String Bikini" or Harcum Junior College, would scarcely fit our senior citizen magazine.

No doubt, the consumer-product and producer-consumer feedback loops work out to a perceived mutual advantage up to the point where mild fixation and over-specialization occurred. Morris Wolfe looks upon it as having a manipulative effect:

The trouble with specialized magazines read by scientifically pre-selected audiences is that a highly fragmented audience, each fragment told very much what it wants to hear, may be only in the interest of government and business technocrats. A fragmented society is easier to govern and control.<sup>3</sup>

It is certainly an audience that is easier to sell to, which of course is also a matter of control.

At any rate the audiences for and the varieties of magazines exploded in the post-war world and its splinters covered all sorts of cognitions, deviances, prejudices, tastes, fantasies, wishes, memories, wants, and needs of body and mind. The range was from the foul to the sublime, but mostly the former. There are now magazines for he-men, she-men, and men's men, for the homemaker and the home-breaker; sadists, masochists, and maso-sadists; snobs and slobs; voyeurs of men and voyeurs of women; fetish black boot lickers; female liberationists and female enslavers; for children so young they have to be read to, teenagers of different ages, and young marrieds. There are magazines of serious social analysis and where social concern itself is a kind of freak thing like *The Beaver*, which *Writer's Digest* calls "The wild life magazine for men, age 18-34 . . . interested in sex, cars, scandal in government et cetera."<sup>4</sup> There are magazines for commuter-farmers; farmers who disdain commuters; workers and those off duty (Hong Kong has one called *OffDuty* for servicemen and other off-duty government employees). There are magazines of fiction and of articles which are

virtually all fiction (*Midnight*), of false confessions and untrue *True Stories*; intellectual magazines, filth magazines, and muckraker magazines; of the Far Right, the Far Left, but mostly the Middle. And magazines for the Know-Nothing, the non-concentration kind, for thumbing rather than reading.

There are magazines for every shade of political thought through Naziism to Anarchism; there is the never-changing rose-covered *Family Journal* for aging idyllic-nostalgic, English-countryside dreamers, complete with vicar and old yew tree; there is *Cape Breton's Magazine* published irregularly in Wreck Cove, N.S., with Micmac Indian tales and bits of Gaelic.<sup>5</sup>

In short, a wild range of magazines: genera, species, sub-species, a Galapagos Islands of minute variation for the survival or the decline of the human species. There are in this sub-species of fetishes, men who prefer in their fantasies to view *Caning* magazine rather than *Spanking* or *Bondage*, that is imaginatively to use the cane against the bottoms of girls rather than the hand, or to see them trussed up and to fawn over their black boots. The new variations of the deviations obviously uncovered an untapped resource of readers who could be cued with a cane yet might recoil at vicarious hand-spanking. But of course there would be some overlapping, as some readers would buy all three.

They are all distorted mirrors of humanity in the sense that the magazine images are thought by their readers to be true reflections of themselves, the he-man or playboy image, for instance.

The reader sees a superman, a Walter Mitty image of himself, a projection that is invariably far from his real self. It is a form of the auto-eroticism of Narcissus. In Freudian terms it arises not from the object-libido but is cathected onto oneself as the reader sees what he would like to be, but obviously is not.

Sometimes the sex angle is used to impale the reader who will then be treated to tales of violence like the synthetic sex attractants used to lure the black carpet beetle and pinebark beetle to their doom.

In a way magazine readers tend to become fans, faithful readers on the principle of selective perception, seeking only reinforcement of their view of life rather than encounter contrary or challenging views. Demographic programming with some sick psychic servicing on motivational research lines takes place. Inevitably, the mind narrows, communication is made difficult, introversion follows and with it occurs a kind of self-inflicted violence.

Such concentration tends to tunnel vision, people become solipsistic if not narcissistic. Erasmus expressed this audience-addiction in these terms five centuries ago when he wrote *The Praise of Folly* in 1511. (Interestingly enough, the book was illustrated by the woodcut drawings of Albrecht Dürer, who employed this new and formidable mass media device to show Folly as a young woman got up in an academic gown and a donkey's cap that ended in a jester's bow.) Folly is the

Scholarly Fool, a female satyr and something of an ironic burlesque of herself in that she also represents the female sex figure which has always been so attractive in the virgin mythology of man.

"I am she – the only she, I may say – whose divine influence makes gods and men rejoice," Folly proclaims. In speaking to an assembly of academics, of "foolosophers," she literally "puts on" her audience, to use a McLuhanesque term, wears it like a mask, signifies its pretensions in her person. She notes how the audience brightens when she, the Fool, steps up to speak because they have had a few drinks. These "solemn asses" are as much interested in entertainment as any frivolous group, but they make out that they are not. Folly then speaks in praise of herself and deems it as decent as the self-praise of "the best people and scholars even."

With a certain adverse modesty they are wont to convey instructions to some sycophantic speaker or prattling poet whom they have engaged at a fee; and then *they hear back from him their praises, that is to say, some pure fiction*. The blushing listener meanwhile spreads his plumes like a peacock and bridles while the brazen adulator searches among the gods to find a parallel for this good-for-nothing and proposes him as the complete exemplar of all virtues – from which the man himself knows that he is farther away than twice infinity ... [Emphasis added].<sup>6</sup>

Here is indeed an early satire on the reinforced audience and its purchase of palatable messages. Little has changed. Volume One, "The Uncertain Mirror," of the Special Senate Committee Report on the Mass Media noted that "... in a land of bubblegum forests and lollipop trees, every man would have his own newspaper or broadcasting station, devoted exclusively to programming that man's opinion and perceptions."<sup>7</sup> In fact he comes very close to this with the plethora of magazines and their fine shadings of audience-interests.

Next to the narrowness that stultifies (though of course some magazines are less this way than others) there is the over-immersion in a surrogate world which, despite its breadth or depth, remains a substitute for living. Katherine Govier, a writer for *Toronto Life*, expressed it this way in the October 1976 issue:

Readers focussed on glossy pages are oblivious to life passing by. They gobble up ads and news and gossips and reviews, barely distinguishing one from the other, finding themselves everywhere, getting the whole gamut of human experience for a buck without the hassle of other people ... *New Yorker* readers are the worst. They never even talk, except to quote Pauline Kael. They just flash the covers and the attitudes at one another ... Strange the way people live. He stays home and reads. I stay home and write. We both hunger for something that transcends ordinary life. Media is a kind of peaceful murder, a hastening of immortality. It keeps the neighbors and police from getting on your nerves.<sup>8</sup>

## Chapter Five

# Violence May be Good or Bad: Biophilia and Necrophilia

Our position here is that violence may be good or bad in actuality and in the media. Certainly, every portrayal of violence cannot be condemned. Questions arise as to the meaning, frequency, extent, style, manner of conveyance, intent, character of the message-makers, characteristics of the message, audience, use of medium, and any known effects. This has been summarized by Harold Lasswell as a study of "Who says what, through what medium, to whom, and with what effect."<sup>1</sup> But the effects, the consequences, are of course the unknown quantity in this formula and the reason for enquiries such as that of this commission. Almost all studies of media devolve on the crucial question of social consequences and all research shows it to be a highly complex issue. As Joseph Klapper concluded from his research on others' research:

Mass communication does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influences.<sup>2</sup>

The media are more likely to reinforce the existing conditions than to change them. Although he has pointed out that there are occasions when "mass communication does function in the service of change," Klapper says one of two conditions is likely to exist. Either:

3. a. the mediating factors will be found to be inoperative and the effect of the media will be found to be direct; OR
- b. the mediating factors, which normally favor reinforcement, will be found to be themselves impelling toward change.
4. There are certain residual situations in which mass communication seems to produce direct effects, or directly out of itself to serve certain psycho-physical functions.<sup>3</sup>

The Lasswell formula, "Who says what, et cetera," should, of course, include in the "to whom" (audience analysis) a consideration of the role of selective perception wherein every message is changed by the individual receiver. People psychologically censor messages to suit their own needs and predispositions with a resulting effect on the message. Distortion occurs; additions occur that were not present in the original message, and subtractions of unpalatable material take place. The message can, in fact, become

diametrically different in the mind of the receiver from what it was when transmitted by the message-maker. There are thus two meanings for every message and therefore two effects. We see and hear what we want to see and hear. In Lippmann's words, "We do not at first see, and then define, we define first and then see," or, as McLuhan has epitomized it, "Believing is seeing." Studies in cognitive dissonance similarly reveal how people "change" an object, an experience, or an image to suit their needs and reduce conflict within themselves.

The difficulty of isolating a mass media message or many messages as the sole cause of any behaviour in the real world – notably of "direct effects" on people – have led to much pessimism on the possibility of arriving at any definite conclusions. Does violence in the media lead to imitation, delinquency, crime, or any anti-social behaviour? Does it have any effect at all? Does it, far from inciting, on the contrary provide an outlet for violent tendencies instead of anti-social actions in real life, thereby providing a service to society? The first is the incitement theory, the second the "no-effect" theory, and the third the catharsis theory. It should be noted, however, that the catharsis theory usually rests on ignorance of its context and seldom, if ever, can be applied to the ephemeral forms of contemporary mass media fiction. Aristotle in his *Poetics* was writing of Greek tragedy in one of the great classic periods of drama that has survived to this day. It was a drama that may have been capable of *Katharsis*, that is a purgation of viewers through the emotions of pity and fear. The medium was the stage, closely connected with the audience, the theme was quasi-religious, well known, consensual, and deeply uniting, and the language was poetry of the highest order. *The Bionic Woman* or *Official Detective* can hardly compare with *Oedipus Rex*.

The feeling of futility on this question of effects was early expressed by Bernard Berelson when he wrote that:

Some kinds of communication on some kinds of issues, brought to the attention of some kinds of people under some kinds of conditions, have some kinds of effects.<sup>4</sup>

To that could be added "in some kinds of ways." For it

can be said that Violence 1 is not Violence 2 is not Violence 3. A serious treatment of the increase or decrease of crime with case histories or, say, of the nature of sadism in society cannot compare with the sensationalist tabloid treatment that revels in the details, or invents them, in a sick way.

News violence may be similar to but is not the same as drama violence. We must avoid the kind of generalizations that semanticist Alfred Korzybski spoke of when he said that even Apple 1 is not the same as Apple 2.<sup>5</sup>

Philosophically this raises another question about criteria. If we are to decide what is "bad violence" or "good violence", and to evaluate on a scale between Violence 1,2,3 et cetera we need a higher or ultimate criterion. A measurement stick cannot measure itself. John Stuart Mill encountered the problem of criteria and the ultimate criterion but did not deal with it. Happiness or pleasure for the greatest number was to be the highest good. But then when he said there were different "kinds" of happiness, a new criterion was called for. Not all happiness was good. Some was better than others. How then – by what measuring rod – do you say it is "better"? For Mill it was an informed, intellectual, reflective kind of happiness above the level of the sensual, momentary pleasures. Similarly, the need for a higher criterion to distinguish violence as it is handled by one magazine over another is needed. If the recent war in Angola is the subject of an article in *Reader's Digest* and in *This Magazine*, and both are discussing war violence, why would one qualify as praiseworthy or non-violent and the other as an instrument of violence? Why indeed did *Reader's Digest* support the war in Vietnam?

There is so much propaganda, so much lying from right, left, and centre, so many economic and political interests that it is extremely difficult for the layman to determine the truth of any politico-economic situation, especially when it is not a familiar one. But there have been precedents, records of interested parties covering up their real motives as in the "non-intervention" policy of the Spanish civil war immediately before World War II, which showed that people were hoodwinked by terminology. One kind of violence was avoided: direct state participation by the Western powers which meant no help for the status quo forces, the constitutional government of Spain, and indirect additional help for the rebel fascist forces of General Franco who was being directly assisted by Hitler and Mussolini. Obviously when all attempts at negotiation failed violence was needed to maintain a peaceful, democratic state (as might well be necessary today in the case of South Africa). This might have led to increased bloodshed, but such direct confrontation with the dictators at that time might well have prevented World War II.

Similarly, during the Vietnam War, the words "Capitulation" and "Munich Pact" were used

frequently, taken out of context from the ignominy that was the Munich Agreement: Chamberlain's "peace in our time" pact with Hitler. Transferring this phraseology to the Vietnam War, it was said that if the U.S. capitulated to the "Communists" by withdrawing support for the Saigon Government it would be a capitulation like Chamberlain's. People were unable to see that the two situations – two violent wars, one civil in the case of Spain, and one an American invasion of Vietnam – were two fantastically different violences. The National Liberation Front and the North Vietnam forces could not be compared with Nazi Germany which had become so powerful as an industrial war machine as to threaten the entire world and was not just defending its home territory. The real similarity was that of U.S. aggression and Nazi German aggression. But such is the befuddling process of language, of semantics in the service of vicious propaganda.

The ultimate criteria suggested here for decisions about real violence and media violence would be humanistic, in which life forces would be seen to predominate over those of death in determining the "goodness" or "badness" of violence and in various degrees. Life forces would include the ideals of free humanity: both the freedoms "from" of the Atlantic Charter during World War II and "freedoms for" developed since then: equality, civil liberties, opportunity, and the human-dignity rights of the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

The criterion derives from humanism. It is well expressed by Erich Fromm in his *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* where he compares "biophilia" with "necrophilia":

Biophilia is the passionate love of life and of all that is alive; it is the wish to further growth, whether in a person, a plant, an idea or a social group. The biophilous person prefers to construct rather than to retain. He wants to be more rather than to have more. He is capable of wondering, and he prefers to see something new rather than to find confirmation of the old. He loves the adventure of living rather than certainty. He sees the whole rather than only the parts, structure rather than summations. He wants to mold, and to influence by love, reason and example; not by force, by cutting things apart, by the bureaucratic manner of administering people as if they were things. Because he enjoys life and all its manifestations he is not a passionate consumer of newly packed "excitement."<sup>6</sup>

The "good" of biophilic people is all that serves life; evil is all that serves death. But Fromm recognizes that people and situations are both, though one or the other predominates.

Like life itself, though not like death, this is enormously complicated when it comes to deciding what serves life or the media surrogates of life and what serves death. There are necrophilous magazines, for example *Midnight*, in the physical sense, and *Time* under Luce in the socio-politico-economic sense of journalism for "the haters, the racists, those in favor of war, bloodshed, and destruction . . . cohorts for a dictatorial leader."<sup>7</sup>

The decision on the presence of violence in these and other publications would not be difficult. The next task is to discover the kind, degree, and intensity of the violence and then to ascertain what they are doing to people and society. Some certainly should be abolished or placed in clinics for addicts, to be handed out with information on mental diseases or deviant behaviour. New ways of studying effects must be found and old inhibitory methods must be changed. Too many young social scientists have been forced to follow the path of behavioural science and end up as clerks counting things, incidences of occurrences, without insight or creative depth. As David Riesman expressed it:

Work in the field of communications is inviting at the moment because of its very ambiguity and lack of structure. It is a somewhat transient waystation where people can meet who don't quite want to commit themselves to the field of literature (as monopolized by English Departments) or to the social sciences (as monopolized by departments of sociology or political science) – and, as Mr. Berelson indicates, there is also room for people with an interest in economics and aesthetics . . . in Leo Lowenthal's famous essay in which he traced the shift from heroes of production to heroes of consumption in just two popular magazines what was necessary was not an elaborate project but a good idea and a library.<sup>8</sup>

To which Lewis Dexter added:

Riesman fears that "too sophisticated and inbred an emphasis upon methodology and research technology . . . will lead us to be afraid of taking the risks of creativity . . . the apparatus of negative criticism becomes a potent weapon for demolishing imaginative and exciting ideas . . . at a certain point men learn *how not to do things*."<sup>9</sup>

## Chapter Six

# Three Ways in which Violence is Present in Magazines

The synthetic violence in magazine covers occurs in three ways:

1. It is in one or more episodes, articles, or fiction stories according to the Commission's definition and this paper's criteria for identifying media violence. Questions then arise on frequency. How many episodes? Is it a policy? Is this typical or an isolated case? How is the violence depicted? Is it in a way that seems to have "meaning" or is it "meaningless" violence "for its own sake" (to attract readers of some kinds)? Is it "sensational" in that it attempts to exaggerate or to add elements or arrange them in such a way as to make the synthetic more shocking or disturbing for most readers than experiencing the real? Is it, therefore, false to reality? Even though it is fiction, does it employ melodrama and sentimentality that do violence to normal experience? If there are overt episodes of violence, does the violence parallel or approach the nature of violence in real life in reference to human motivations, feelings, suffering, relationship to society, guilt, rewards, solutions, justice, *vis-à-vis* death, cruelty, crime, alienation, et cetera?

Every depiction of violence is not to be condemned *per se* and certainly not *a priori*.

2. All words and pictures in magazines are persuasive. No matter how "objective" writers, editors, illustrators may perceive their work as being, they are invariably subjective through selection of material, placement, selections within material, word usage, layout, emphasis or lack of emphasis (playing "up" or playing "down"), and their opposite sides: omissions, et cetera. Information is ideology. But we must point out that some magazines are more overtly persuasive than others of the covert persuasion mentioned above. Normally these use the writer's byline (name) and the viewpoints expressed in the article are out in the open for all to see. Thus, we have to judge magazines of "hidden persuasion," to use Vance Packard's phrase, and magazines of manifest persuasion. There are, of course, magazines with both overt and covert expression. In the latter, the question of propaganda is more at issue.

It is argued below that much violence is done in this way.

3. The third way consists, not of discrete parts of the magazine but of the whole thrust of the magazine. The entire issue is designed according to a pattern, an ideology, a goal. This is very obvious in the small magazines of hate literature, occupational, sales, political magazines, "house organs" of companies, industrial magazines with their public relations aims, et cetera. But it was not always so obvious in magazines such as the falsely named "newsmagazine" called *Time*, and less for the magazine of carefully selected right-wing, Middle American, and drug-sale articles called *Reader's Digest*. While the visible part is variety, the entire contents really serve toward a propagandistic end defined by DeWitt Wallace 53 years ago. To use a favourite McLuhan image, they are like the juicy bone carried by the burglar to distract the watchdog of the mind.

## Chapter Seven

# Summary of Criteria for Identifying and Classifying Media Violence

(These 12 criteria are an expansion of the Commission's five-point general definition of media violence published in the Interim Report of January, 1976. They are applied to some magazine content for issues published in the first half of 1976 and to their past performance in some cases. Reference to evidence of, say Violence 3 in a magazine, therefore refers to crime counselling or incitement as set forth herein.)

**1. Warmongering.** Condoning, counselling, inciting or portraying in the way of glory, of "winning" a war, or of massacring, war as an instrument of national policy for gain, inciting aggressive behaviour or engendering military attitudes that may lead to physical war, with the exceptions noted on the following pages.

**2. Torture.** Condoning, counselling, inciting, ignoring for serious analysis or portraying in a sadistic or meaningless way, in words or pictures, the use of torture as an official policy, e.g. for social control by the state, police, et cetera, and as acts of an interpersonal, non-consenting kind as in crime or historic accounts. The latter would include the Gestapo-type torture portrayed in some male magazines, with savage whippings; the former would include the obscene government cruelty to prisoners of the Pinochet junta in Chile, and some 30 other states where torture is a policy. But it would not include the consenting adult behaviour of deviant adults as portrayed in *Spanking*, *Caning*, and *Bondage* magazines which is a kind of fetish sickness of Violence 7.

**3. Crime, Social Control.** Condoning, counselling crime . . . portraying in a favourable light or revelling in gruesome, sadistic, or obscene aspects of crime; killing, manslaughter, maiming, wounding, mutilation, cruelty, kidnapping, imprisonment, rape, molestation, mob action, destructiveness, besetting and other criminal-code offences, including crimes committed by law-enforcement officers.

**4. Vengeance-seeking.** Condoning, counselling, inciting, portraying in a favourable light vengeance as an acceptable motive, solution, e.g. as a model for prison, as justifiable action against persons or aggregates. Vengeance on a big-power political level was at work in challenging the Treaty of Versailles and used to

arouse a whole nation to war. The Treaty itself was a form of Vengeance in turn or, at least, a case of humiliation, "doing violence to."

**5. Aggression.** Condoning, counselling, inciting, distorting, ignoring for serious analysis or portraying in a sadistic and meaningless way aggression or predator conduct of an interpersonal or group nature as in a teen-age gang, a human hunting expedition, team violence as in hockey stories, articles that idealize aggressive tactics.

**6. Authoritarianism.** Counselling inciting, portraying, et cetera. There is an injunction to remain unemotional at all times, especially towards another person as in selling techniques; to social Darwinism in which "survival of the fittest" is said to apply to modern economic competition, business practices, and even social relations; there is intimidation, incitement to mob or vigilante action. Magazines such as *National Review* have long been this way.

**7. Dehumanizing.** Word or picture symbols that tend to dehumanize, often through depicting, foreshortening one part, e.g. sex organs, skin pigmentation (black, red, brown, "yellow," white) over another in a psychic grotesquerie. The dehumanizing process employed in many media is physical and psychological violence that can lead the reader out of the magazine and into real violence under certain conditions, as we have observed, insofar as the human receives inhuman treatment as in rape (often portrayed as being funny or in a macho "cave-man" way) and humiliation of other sorts. Many magazines are guilty of this reductionism in which the female is reduced to her sexual organs; an intercourse machine.

Stereotyping, hate-mongering, race generalizations apply here, e.g. the word "Paki" to apply to a stereotype of any foreign-born emigrant to Canada; other stereotypes such as those of "all" unemployed, "all" criminals as bad; "all" social scientists as favouring one policy.

Brainwashing and conditioning under certain circumstances apply here. (Differentiating conditioning of the Skinnerian type and socialization or acculturation of the young has to be made.)

"Crowding" is part of dehumanizing. As experiments

with animals have shown, mental illness and anti-social behaviour can result from crowding, and in the world of tomorrow this could be a social crime for real estate development, builders, landlords. Media accommodation to developers who overcrowd neighbourhoods, denying people space outside and crowding many in high-rise or other inside space arrangements, must be rated as a form of condoning violence.

**8. Sensationalizing.** Violent language and pictures for non-violent situations. (Point 2 in the Commission's definition of media violence, page 2, Interim Report, January 1976.) This may be termed sensationalism which can be defined in everyday use as going beyond the real situation for the sake of effect – that is visceral or sensory effect, a jolting or autonomic nerve reaction. "Energy" is pumped into the portrayal, the words or images; excitement, drama, conflict are used to sharpen up the story. It is overplayed.

**9. Revelling, wallowing, glorifying.** Violent language and/or pictures for violent situations in real life, Normally, a magazine could not be faulted for portraying violence "as it is" in real life as an accurate or truth-seeking correspondence occurs between symbol and reality. There is or seems to be verisimilitude; yet all symbols are abstractions and magazines may revel or wallow in the violent aspects, emphasizing them unduly. It is this revelling that constitutes Violence 9.

**10. Euphemism, underplaying.** – as a form of doing violence to a situation. Using soft language, apologetics, for violence that needs to be stated if reform is to take place. Censoring any mention of violence to downplay it as a quarantine action for those who are not to be troubled is another form of latent violence.

**11. Static violence.** Violence in which the immovable object is met by the irresistible force. This may be institutional violence in which an entrenched force will not permit reform. There is a blocking of change, élite control, privilege.

**12. "Doing Violence to".** This is to principles, beliefs, identity, truth-value through deliberate distortion, misinformation, falsification, libelling, rumour-mongering, profanation, the tyranny of the majority over minority rights.

It can be seen from the above that "media violence" in magazines does not occur under these conditions: (1) It is not "of the media" themselves, that is not artificially induced or manufactured except in the case of fiction for which some of these criteria would apply, e.g. revelling, sensationalizing, dehumanizing. (2) It is, in the case of articles and shorter prose forms, close to reality or the quality called verisimilitude: very similar to what actually happened or to the situation that existed. Here the whole question of bias and subjectivity enters into the equation. (3) In commentary on violence that it is serious, analytical, well-informed, and intellectually honest, with reality and truth as the goal rather than a vested or sectarian interest or personal aggrandizement.

## Chapter Eight

# Detailed Discussion of Criteria

1. War-making, warmongering (sabre rattling in print), warlike editorial policy. Counselling policies for the purpose of war, but not including wartime propaganda. The “communications situation” must include as context condoning of war as an instrument of settling disputes; inflammatory language that may incite aggressive attitudes or action; ordinary language that deliberately falsifies information. Yet there will be “Clear and present danger” contexts in which preparation for a “defensive war” is justified (unless you are a pacifist and believe this is never the case, not even a U.N. war, say, against oppression). The undeclared war against South Vietnam falls in the aggression category, and the secret invasion of Cambodia by U.S. forces is a compounding of aggression. On the other hand, if warlike language were used to prepare for a feared assault on national territory this could not be considered warmongering. “Suit the action to the word, the word to the action,” Hamlet told the players, but here of course it has to be defined in highly complex international terms. The punishment must fit the crime in judicial terms; in political and here in semantic-linguistic terms, the “weapon word” may be necessary or justified when the crime of war is committed. At the same time, threatening and inflammatory language, distorted information, and other propaganda techniques may be held guilty of warmongering. The “war cry” should not become “cry wolf” as in the Cold War, which was or is a camouflage for nationalistic or exploitative ambitions. And finally the entire situation is vastly complicated by the legitimacy of the power structure in the status quo or the insurgency of guerrilla activity.

Is martial music justified in peace time? Are martial words, or even-tempered but carefully crafted Iago words that can lead to violence – are these justified? Aside from the judgment as to their justification we can at least identify their use in magazines as a first step.

2. Torture. This would include the use of torture in whatever context, for here, there can be no justification whatsoever, neither in wartime nor in peacetime, in personal crime or in statecraft, whether of the hideous Moors torture-murders of three children, of police

methods as in the “genital clamp” case in the recent investigation of Toronto police methods, or torture as an instrument of national policy as investigated by Amnesty International.

3. Crime violence, As in summary.
4. Vengeance violence. As in summary.
5. Aggression. As in summary.
6. Authoritarianism. As in summary.

7. Words or pictures that tend to dehumanize and mechanize. This is media violence that can lead to real violence. The essence of Marshall McLuhan’s work concerns dehumanization, although the very opposite seems to be the case for those who view his comments on technology as being dehumanizing. At the end of the television film *This is Marshall McLuhan* (NBC), he said, “There is no inevitability as long as there is a willingness to think.”

“The unperson is the inevitable result of improved communication,” he said in *Take Today: The Executive as Dropout*. Barriers of private consciousness are overcome for collective awareness, a tribal dream. The message of *The Mechanical Bride*, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, and *Understanding Media* is that “specialism” is de-personalizing.

But the price we pay for special technological tools, whether the wheel or the alphabet or radio, is that these massive extensions of sense constitute “closed systems.” Our private senses are not closed systems, but are endlessly translated into each other in that experience which we call consciousness. Our extended senses, tools, technologies, are incapable of interplay or collective awareness.

However, that does not include television which is part of the electric age in McLuhan’s words, and demands of the senses that they become collectively conscious because of high-speed transmission. While television is said to have returned this wholeness, print separates man from man by virtue of the private book and emphasizes one sense over another. Reading replaces an ear with an eye, does away with all auditory and sensuous complexity found in oral communication. Thus it tends to dismember the individual psychologically, i.e. to be psychologically violent. “Sensory ratios” are altered in that the eye takes in the information and

moves in a linear way along the lines of print, setting up a sensory "bias" as the compartmentalization of knowledge takes place in the mind as on the page.

The "violence" that is done to the person in this specialism – like a sort of "amputation" of the legs when you emphasize use of the medium of the motor-car over walking – is pertinent to this study. It was brought out in more graphic detail by McLuhan in his first book, *The Mechanical Bride*, for there he wrote, "Thus, for example, the legs "on a pedestal" presented by the Gotham Hosiery Company are one facet of our "replaceable parts" cultural dynamics. In a specialist world it is natural that we should select some single part of the body for attention. Al Capp expressed this ironically when he had Li'l Abner fall desperately in love with the pictorial scrap of a woman's knee, saying "Why not? Some boys fall in love with the expression on a gal's face. Ab is a knee man!" In this way, the specialist world is akin to fetishism, i.e. the worship of an object, idolatry, whether for sexual gratification or religious mysticism.

8. Sensationalism. Violent language and pictures for non-violent situations. This may be called "sensationalism" which can be defined in everyday use as going beyond the real situation for the sake of "effect" – that is a visceral effect of reaction. Energy is pumped in; excitement, drama, conflict "beef up" the story. It is "overplayed."

9. Revelling, wallowing in, glorifying. Violent language and pictures for violent situations. It could be verisimilitude. Hockey is not a Sunday School picnic (unless picnics are getting rough these days too).

Still, despite the accuracy, the correspondence between symbol and reality, there may be a sense of "revelling" in the violence and of an abstraction process in which it is presented as necessary, colourful violence with nobody really suffering. Not really verisimilitude at all because of this abstraction and therefore by concentrating on part of the action – the slamming against the boards or the bullet through the shoulder at the moment of impact – you never get pain or suffering, and never see a shot through the groin or one that rips out the face. It is antiseptic. (The foregoing sentence is not sensational because it is in an analytical framework and describes what actually happens.)

As for pictures, they may lie. It is the same abstracting process in which the moment of impact alone is captured for the news film or the still photo. There are no shots of the player in the hospital room (or the morgue) afterwards. In short, the *meaning* is missing.

10. Euphemism, underplaying, deceptively soft language for violent situations. Is it possible that "underplaying" a situation or event could be called violence? "Euphemism" is taken from the Greek *euphemizein*, "to use an auspicious word for an inauspicious or evil one, of good sound or omen." Yet, ironically enough, euphemism has come to have a bad

meaning: the substitution of soft words or phrases, mildness, or an indirect expression for more accurate ones that might be unpleasant or offensive.

Here we have a language paradox in which mild words that indeed may turn away wrath have been used for purposes of escapism and for concealment of a truth that should be told and perhaps told in a way that is more "accurate" or at least closer to the human reaction level, to revulsion or horror.

The Vietnam War offered such euphemisms as "body count" (not nearly as grim as words such as "the number of dead people"), "incursion" for invasion of Cambodia; "pacification", et cetera.

When John F. Kennedy, the U.S. President was searching for a term that would mean the same thing as "blockade" but not have the same automatic consequences on public opinion when used officially in connection with blocking the Russian ships approaching Cuba, he concocted the word "quarantine." Such political euphemism differs very greatly from personal uses (e.g. in such phrases as "premarital relations" for sexual intercourse before marriage) in that they dangerously hide the truth, while the personal uses are innocuous. In escaping reality, the political words may pave the way to violence in the same way that any discovery of lying, however ambiguous, may lead to rage as it did in the Watergate hearings.

In this way, euphemisms may do the work of violent words. Underplaying is the violence that is suppression.

In the political sphere, a good example of euphemism or "downplaying" a violent event occurs when a magazine, or any medium, depicts that event or comments on it in such mild tones as to cause a semantic reaction of outrage, anger, dismay and perhaps fear. This would have occurred if, when World War II broke out, the newspapers had headlined on Page One the story of a bank robbery in their city and placed in small type a heading on page 20, "War breaks out." Naturally, our sense of values would be disturbed – to use a mild word.

Actual examples of this occur every day, of course, but not in such well-defined situations where virtually everybody's sense of values is in accord. *Time* magazine has long been guilty of "playing down" ideological opponents and "playing up" favoured people, institutions, and events to suit its militant arch-conservative politics. A classic Times case of playing down was on Nazi Germany's occupation of the Rhineland: "Germany has been naughty but is not be spanked."

Two sides of the same coin are evident here. Support for violent military behaviour through false "reportage" which treats the "naughty" act as a child's prank, thus setting up a parallel so grossly out of line with the event depicted that the language cannot be called representative of reality. In short, violence may be inherent or latent in a seemingly non-violent use of language out of

context. Lippmann referred to it as a “pseudo-environment” of words that are far from the real world.

11. The Immovable Object, met by the Irresistible Force. This kind of violence is based on a truism that change is inevitable, however slow and imperceptible. As the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, expressed it, “You cannot step in the same river twice”. If this is so, violence can occur when there is no yielding on the *status quo* because the entrenched parties refuse to allow new entrants or new ideas into the field and block their aspirations and expectations by simply doing nothing. Doing Nothing in the face of life’s dynamism is therefore defined here as Violence. It can be the greatest invisible violence of all simply because, being invisible, vested, and entrenched, it is all the more provocative to those who have a right to a share of power or succession. Thus it can be said, for example, that in relation to international affairs, the Portuguese dictator Salazar and his successor were following the Do Nothing Policy as an Immovable Object while forward-moving political parties, who had the right to expect that any European country should follow a more egalitarian pattern, were ready to effect political and economic change. The death of Salazar opened the flood-gates of pent-up frustrations and so the tide of humanity moved forward in Portugal and into the colonies where it had extended even into the traditionally conservative military class.

Often the Immovable Object is an individual or an institution or a society and therefore is looked upon as peaceful. It is law-abiding and why should it not be, insofar as it makes the laws? On the other hand, the Irresistible Force seeking change is regarded as violent or highly aggressive because people have, rightly, been conditioned to respect the law. But the Object simply stays put, being in a kind of fortress, refusing to negotiate or to meet with the opposing force, blocking all human progress and maintaining the *status quo*, while millions of people are in dire need of change.

The overt violence that occurs in the interest of necessary change is always visible and it is this violence that gets the symbolic attention, headlines, and television coverage, while the violence of the unyielding object remains invisible. This often happens in a strike, as the strikers picket while the owners remain unknown. They represent Institutional Violence from the top.

12. “Doing Violence to” principles. Words, pictures that profane in the widest sense of that word, e.g. that prostitute a deity for private gain, doing violence to the highest qualify of man. In *The New Organum* Francis Bacon wrote of these Idols that have beset men’s minds: Idols of the Tribe, of the Cave, of the Market Place, and of the Theatre.<sup>3</sup> The last-named may do violence to the mind insofar as it includes the superstition of astrology and of “things to be somehow similar” or, in other words, images such as we get in mass media. “Blasphemy” enters into the picture when media lead people to follow “false gods” and especially when, in the words of Erich Fromm, “God himself has become

one of the idols – in fact even the highest Idol who gives his blessing to the others.” He asks: “Is there as much difference as we think between the Aztec human sacrifices to their gods and the modern human sacrifices in war to the idols of nationalism?” This, again, is a part of the dehumanizing process, as idolatry is submission that arises from alienation and is not compatible with freedom. Man has transferred his own living powers into things outside him, Fromm says, which “he is forced to worship in order to retain a modicum of self and . . . to keep his sense of identity.”<sup>4</sup>

#### Note

With No. 1 Violence as war in the sense of media warmongering and No. 12 as “Doing Violence to” there would seem to be a rough approximation here of a descending scale, but it is impossible to quantify or to qualify “violences” in any exact way. For example, nine types of violence are identified for *Reader’s Digest* while 11 are shown for *Official Detective*. The *Digest* may be seen as representing in its media way the authoritarian policies of a power elite. It may directly or indirectly support aggressive war or war-making attitudes and policies that can result in the deaths of thousands as in Vietnam or even millions, if not human extinction, in the event of a third world war. The sordid “detective” magazine, on the other hand, deals with small-scale violence, as heinous as it is in terms of murder, rape, cruelty, et cetera. Who then is the more necrophilious? Size – extent – the whole human situation must be taken into account.

## Chapter Nine

### *The Reader's Digest*

Generally, we think of *Reader's Digest* as a magazine of sweetness and light, mom's apple pie, unforgettable (and unbelievable) people with hearts of gold, the American Way as model for the world, medical miracles and human feats of perseverance, courage, and faith. God is also very big in the pages of the Digest. A Montreal freelance writer who sold frequently to the Digest tells how a story entitled "I Was a Spy for the FBI" did not sell until it was changed to "I Was a Spy for the FBI and Found God." It illustrates how the cueing or triggering of interest is carried out. In this case the cue is God. Get God in there and it will sell to the Digest audience. He has long been a *Deus ex Machina* in Digest drama. If the miracle cures don't cure there is always the Almighty to fall back on and at least psychological needs may be served. The Digest formula has been summed up as "Oh the wonder of it, oh the glory of it, oh!"

Certainly, this part of the formula is not unpalatable, although deception, exaggeration, or dangerous escapism may occur; false hopes may be raised. But some praise can be expressed for its long anti-smoking and car-accident campaigns; though Nader-type criticism of car manufacture was not a theme. Robert Cirino in *Don't Blame the People* notes, too, that the Digest was "alone in the middle sixties in crusading against the vast sums of money being spent to send a man to the moon."

Yet the dark other side of the Digest lies nowhere near these ideals of plain folk, Horatio Alger and Little Orphan Annie. Here Horatio Alger becomes Daddy Warbucks, the multinational hero with Punjab, the giant, at his side symbolic of power. Little business expands to become Big Business and finally global business, a colossus: an industrial power buttressed by the state, bureaucratic and impersonal, which bears no resemblance to the lowly model of individualism often used. Annie is self-reliant, considerate of others; multinationals move about the world scene taking advantage of every subvention, tariff, accelerated depreciation, tax law, and write-off that they can, regardless of social effect. The homey side of *Reader's Digest* has long been a camouflage of the sturdy little Annie type, masking

the comic strip's philosophy which supports the giant corporation, Warbucks, against social enterprise, and U.S. capital investment abroad against indigenous effort. Punjab – the military – is always at hand, as was well-documented in the overthrow and murder of Allende with CIA help. Here is violence which Digest propaganda legitimates.

Clipping articles originally generated and published by other editors was, interestingly enough, a kind of parasitic activity that two ambitious sons of Presbyterian ministers lighted on at the same time: Henry Luce, the co-founder of *Time*, and DeWitt Wallace, the co-founder with his wife of *Reader's Digest*. While scissors and paste have long been symbols of the journalistic trade, they were made into a virtue and a science: Luce scissored his way through newspapers and Wallace through magazines. In both cases, the publishers had the same idea and found a need. People in the United States and other nations entering the advanced industrial stage had become too busy to read. Movement of the eyes along lines of type was becoming tedious, as McLuhan was later to point out, and the machine-like demand for instant satisfactions, for speed, had shown itself. Wallace offered to extract and cut down a selection of what he termed "articles of lasting interest" and serve them up in a neat pocket-sized package, even as Luce offered to scan the world's news of the week and package it in one magazine. The excommunication that had occurred in the urbanized industrial society was to be overcome by a digestive tablet and a *Time* capsule for the mind. Paradoxically, the Digest, long a symbol of convention, was first produced in bohemian Greenwich Village, at No. 1 Minetta Lane. In February, 1922, Wallace and his wife, Lila Bell Acheson, published a 62-page issue of 1,500 copies as Vol. 1, No. 1.

The Digest moved out of its grubby Greenwich Village office (actually a basement under a speakeasy) in one year to modest quarters in Pleasantville, 40 miles north of New York. By 1930 the circulation was 216,000 and the Digest was grossing \$600,000. In 1939 it moved into a \$1,500,000 building of its own at Chappaqua, near Pleasantville. Yet it had a staff of amateurs until

the mid-Thirties, with two of the top editors being former clergymen and one a former missionary.<sup>2</sup>

Today, the Digest has a paid monthly circulation greater than the population of Canada, 28 million copies, and its audited world "readership" circulation at close to 3 people perusing each copy, is greater than the population of the United Kingdom or France or West Germany. On any theory of the homogenizing effects of a mass medium, the statistic is ominous. As Walter Lippmann put it, "When we all think alike, no one thinks very much."

Early in its career *Reader's Digest* promoted a school program, and many schools, even colleges, including Canadian, included it in their curricula as naive teachers and administrators had not realized it had editorial biases. They actually believed then and still believe that the Digest presents a cross-section of comment and a spectrum of articles from many publications with varying viewpoints. It was thought that Wallace and his editors selected articles of "lasting interest" on a Matthew Arnoldian basis: the best that has been thought and said in the world. Obviously, they had not thought through the implications of Digest ideology, disguised as it was as "no ideology" – impartiality.

However, it was the third of Wallace's criteria for establishing the Digest that really undermined what might have been a unique open-minded magazine of educational benefit: "constructiveness." Wrapped up in the innocent-sounding, cheerful word was not just a Pollyanna world, but Wallace's conception of what is "good" and what is "bad" in the world and in man. Such distinctions leading to Digest selections were, of course, U.S. culture-bound and conditioned by Wallace's past, his experiences, perceptions, conceptions, education, meanings, attitudes, expectations, and, in general, cognitions. The Digest rejected anything conceived as "radical" or defeatist or pessimistic in favour of optimism and "good works" no matter how hollow the "constructive" view.

More specific ingredients of the Digest formula were "dogmatism, optimism, and simplism," wrote John Bainbridge.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, Wallace found the "constructive" formula very lucrative. Readers were not only like Pollyanna but like the listeners to Erasmus's Folly. They liked the escapist world-view that emanated pleasantly from Pleasantville where old-fashioned virtue, like hard work, is always well rewarded. In Digest pages, seldom was heard a discouraging word and indeed the skies were not cloudy all day. People would pay for these unrealities and read the articles as they read fiction.

The readers' self-deceptions no doubt accorded with Wallace's deceptive façade but they could not accord with the deception of the "reprint myth." This consisted of Digest editors writing or assigning articles in the Digest offices and then giving them free to other magazines or paying for them to be published in these

magazines. When the articles appeared in print, the Digest "selected" them for publication in the Digest, a practice known as "planting." Again, Digest readers were tricked into believing that constructive-minded editors of the Digest had looked through magazines objectively and chosen what was good.

As Robert Cirino has observed:

The Digest claims that this is what it is doing – acting as a representative digest of the tens of thousands of articles published monthly in the nation's magazines. On close examination this claim turns out to be grossly misleading. George Bennett, a statistician, classified all Digest articles and found that there are three kinds. One is a genuine report of an article first appearing in some other magazine. Another type used is the "plant" – an article written by or for the Digest, but planted in another magazine first so that when it later appears in the Digest it looks like a genuine reprint. These articles are often given free to smaller magazines such as the American Legion Magazine, the Kiwanis, Rotarian or others like them. This is a method of extending Digest influence even beyond its own readers to include the readership of about sixty other magazines which accept plants. The third type of article is a Reader's Digest original – one that is written solely for or by the Digest and printed nowhere else. Bennett found that from 1939 to 1945 genuine reprints accounted for only 42 per cent of Digest articles while Digest originals or plants accounted for 58 per cent.<sup>4</sup>

Since 1945 the Digest has become more and more fond of its own articles, and as a result more of the articles in the 1960s were Digest originals or plants, and fewer were genuine reprints.

An early objection came from *The New Yorker*. In cancelling its contracts with Digest, it told its readers in a letter that: "If the Digest wanted to become a magazine of original content, then it should have done so directly; it should not have operated through other media to maintain the 'reprint myth.' *The New Yorker* ran Bainbridge's diatribe on the Digest and its critic Dixon Wechter later reviewed Bainbridge's book on the subject. While he did not review it favourably, Wechter made one comment that is instructive in terms of violence. ". . . it does do violence to the magazine's original aim and title." Yet he thought the deception was "chiefly the business of the parties concerned," indicating a buyer-beware policy of the media, as though no violence had been done to principle or to society as a whole.<sup>5</sup>

To its credit, the Digest financed itself on subscriptions and news-stands sales alone for 33 years and was without advertising until 1955. From 1929 until 1955, it conceived of itself partly as a "Consumer Reports" by evaluating widely distributed products: toothpastes, waxes, detergents, and cigarettes. Notably, it campaigned strongly against smoking – a far cry from the more recent tie-in of Digest articles with pharmaceutical companies. In 1967, the medical articles were shown to have a deceptive side. The November issue carried an eight-page detachable Special Advertising Section with several articles in the regular types and formats of Digest articles. It promoted brand names

and pricing policies of prescription drugs and was actually an advertisement by the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of Washington, D.C. the first of four in a \$1 million series. The only indication that it was not a Digest article, but a paid ad, was a three-word notice on the first page and a phrase in small print at the bottom of the last page: "First in a Series Published as a Public Service by the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association, Washington, D.C. 20005." The three words were missing from the million reprints sent to doctors' waiting rooms, hospital reading rooms, and members of the general public who wrote in.

The general counsel of the United States Post Office wrote to the Digest to say that the disguised, or at least not very clearly indicated advertisement was "inconsistent with the spirit and intent" of laws governing publications with second-class mailing privileges. He cited a section of the U.S. Code on "Marking of Paid Reading Matter" that called for "plainly marking it as advertising," but said the law was too weak at that time to enforce. Gaylord Nelson, chairman of the Select Senate Committee on Small Business called it "calculated deception" and accused the drug industry of trying to appear as a non-industry philanthropic group. He cited a report from the Food and Drug Administration saying that the articles were misleading.<sup>6</sup>

This in our view comes under the heading of "Doing Violence to" and here it is the violence to principle, of truth, of trust, and of objectivity in the code of journalism which requires separation of editorial from advertising matter. The consequences could be drastic. Readers could be harmed in taking drugs that seemed to have been scrutinized by their favourite and trusted magazine in a non-commercial context if they hadn't read the very fine print. Real violence – death – might result.

In addition to Violence to Principles that can become harmful as in the case of drugs, there is the more serious Violence of chauvinism, authoritarianism, cold-war politics, corporatism, multinationalism, and anti-humanitarianism. Cirino states that from 1950 through 1969, the Digest presented 84 articles on Vietnam, of which 81 supported the U.S. policy in Vietnam while three were neutral. Not one article criticized U.S. policy on the war, although "many congressmen, senators and retired generals had written many dissenting articles which appeared in various magazines." This 81-article crusade for the most violent war in history was capped in December 1969, by a Digest editorial backing the war and an article by the hawkish writer Joseph Alsop titled "The Vietcong is Losing Its Grip." *Reader's Digest* editors wrote 18 of the 84 articles, and of the Digest's favourite stable of writers on the topic, Alsop was used three times, Hanson Baldwin six times, and Richard Nixon three times beginning with his 1964 article "Needed in Vietnam: The Will to Win."<sup>7</sup>

There were these anti-social "isms" of the *Reader's*

*Digest* in the decade from 1950 to 1959 according to Cirino's study:

*Corporatism and multinationalism:* 99 articles favouring U.S. foreign policy and corporate activity in Latin America, compared with only two unfavourable and ten neutral. The Digest sided with investor-owned electric power companies against customer-owned companies with nine articles in all. In these issues there were full-page advertisements from the investor-owned companies at \$55,000 per page. Annually, private power pays the Digest a quarter of a million dollars in ads.

There were many articles on auto accidents and safety, but not one in a survey between 1940 and 1959 mentioning car design as a factor, and in the Sixties on seat belts no mention of corporate opposition was made.

*Cold-war politicism:* Not one article pointed out the danger to democracy posed by the military-industrial complex as Eisenhower described it in 1960 in his farewell address.

*Corporatism:* In addition to selecting favourable articles there has been, in the reprinting of somewhat more balanced articles, the removal of critical parts that criticized establishment leaders and their corporations. A March 1965 reprint of an *Esquire* article on American gasoline omitted the sections exposing deceptive advertising gimmicks. On pollution, the Digest in the December 1963 issue attacked Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* by reprinting a "hatchet job" from *Time* magazine. Titles of many articles favouring big business interests speak for themselves: "United Fruit's International Partners," "Banks That Built New Business," "Home Sweet Electric Home."

*Anti-humanitarianism:* While the Digest opposed smoking and had the courage to deal with syphilis before other magazines of general circulation, it published only one article on hunger in America from 1945 through 1969 and this not until November 1958. On prison conditions, the Digest said that conditions were deplorable but good men were in charge and something significant was being done.

*Anti-unionism:* The Digest mythologizes "the hard working man" but when he wants to cut into corporate profits in getting a fairer share through a union, it is against him. Reo Christenson found that between 1952-1965, the Digest had 49 articles critical of the labour movement, five neutral and eight favourable. Earlier, Bainbridge found that 13 articles were unfavourable to labour unions and 3 favourable.<sup>8</sup>

*Posture on fascism:* The Digest opposed Roosevelt in his efforts to bring about a coalition of the United Nations in World War II and, like *Time* magazine, it supported Franco, against the Loyalist government of Spain.

Has the Digest changed? A look at the June 1976 issue shows that it is now published in 30 countries and 13 languages, is still doing business at the same old stand. The one change in the Canadian edition is the

use of more articles reprinted from Canadian magazines or written by Canadian writers, a policy it introduced when it faced loss of tax privileges in Canada. The Digest escaped Bill C-58's requirements for 80 per cent content difference from any foreign publication and 75 per cent Canadian ownership that must be met if advertisers are to deduct their costs from taxes. It was decreed that as a Digest it was unlike other magazines. It has put 75 per cent of ownership in a Foundation. In June 1976, it carried 28 articles and a book condensation. Of these 29 pieces, 14 were from U.S. authors or sources, ten from Canadian sources, and five from other countries. This was an increase in Canadian sources from near zero a few years ago to approximately one-third of the entire material or 41 per cent of the North American material. A remarkable advance.

The Digest content in October, 1974, had included 24 articles and one book of which the U.S. accounted for 13 articles and Canada slightly fewer than half that at six articles while another six came from other countries. From this one-quarter of total content near the height of the campaign to tax the Digest like all other U.S. magazines, the ratio of Canadian to non-Canadian material has climbed considerably. Canadian writers and Canadian magazine or book publishers have benefited financially as the Digest pays both on the basis of pages used in reprinting, thus partly ameliorating a situation where the Canadian public bought 1,500,000 copies of the Digest each month as part of a massive world consumption of 28 million buyers plus a possible double or triple that number of readers, while Canadian writers, artists, and editorial talent were virtually denied access to the magazine.

The articles, no matter what their origin, are carefully selected on a right-wing pattern, with few exceptions, as we have seen, or articles that can be classified as largely human and animal interest, humour, nature's wonders, adventure, and salvation through God or drugs. Canadian writers are mostly confined to these latter categories, although sometimes political aspects creep in.

In the June 1976, issue the lead-off article, taken from *Saturday Night* of September 1975, "Are We Too Soft on Criminals?" by Barbara Amiel, is Digest policy all the way — surprising for a magazine such as *Saturday Night* — but readers may not be aware of these aspects: (1) That a digested article telescopes ideas, eliminates qualifications, and oversimplifies. It should not be confused with the original, although it can be close and was fairly close in this case, (2) That the digester can use words and phrases of his own in a so-called paraphrase, and (3) *Saturday Night* is a classic liberal magazine that presents various viewpoints on the basis that "truth will out" as intelligent people compare and judge for themselves. *Reader's Digest*, on the contrary, is a magazine that has an axe to grind and grinds primarily that one axe. A counter-article in *Saturday Night* on prison reform, e.g. "Are We Too Harsh on Criminals?" would probably not be digested. You as a Digest reader

are therefore considered to be an "easily persuasible" type. Experiments have shown that "presentation of 'both sides' was more effective in converting the highly educated, but that one-sidedness was more effective in converting the poorly educated" and those "favouring the advocated view, i.e. as a technique of reinforcement." The message that Ms. Amiel, in *digested form*, puts out amounts to an impression rather than a discussion. It says: Criminals get such light sentences that they sneer at the law and even in court organize their next crime with their sneering buddies. The long-term sentences of years ago might deter them today, but "platoons" of social scientists (her original term) have formulated new methods to rehabilitate Johnny. But common sense says that criminals simply gamble that crime will pay.

In its anti-intellectual tirade, the article says that judges and juries listen to social scientists who are trying to reform and rehabilitate criminals. Judges heed their "preachings" (Digest word, not author's) which fail, so the scientists blame not human nature but imprisonment. (Author Amiel in the original article says "The fault lies in the nature of our institutions and possibly in the nature of man," and then follows with a whopping generalization that puts all social scientists together, "but almost certainly in the nature of social scientists who seem committed to the belief that all crime has environmental causes." Considering the long debate in academe on "nature versus nurture" and shades in between plus newer ones on genetic and body-chemistry causes, this is untenable. In fact, no social scientists' views are examined in the article. An unattributed "recent study" at Guelph is cited, and "New York studies" with a passing reference to two criminologists.) Now the prison system is blamed by the scientists who have a new social science scheme called "diversion" that aims at emptying the prisons or keeping people out of prison, e.g. working in a community project to work off a sentence, and here the chief culprits are the Law Reform Commission and Solicitor General Warren Allmand, who has "an almost mystical" belief in the social sciences. He perceives most criminals as suffering from a lack of love early in life and "simply cannot believe that criminals are other than sick." Thus the writer in the Digest version is represented as believing that they are born bad, and that violence is inherent in humans, despite her citing of other causes in the original, one of which virtually negated the article as cant. This is a theory as much as any social science theory, but one that has given way over many years of experience and observation to one that nurture not nature is responsible, or that it is a bit of both; and that is only the beginning, as the question arises as to what aspects of both and in what way. Allmand's belief is not "almost mystical," as Amiel says, but very commonplace among thoughtful people.

Rehabilitation fails, the author says, and statistics show it. Former minimum-security inmates are said to

be the heaviest crime repeaters. Her next theory is "that people will act, to some extent, according to how they believe society views their actions, and so a light sentence means the offence is small!" "Many Canadians" favour heavier sentences, but advocates of lighter sentences would have us believe leniency aids in rehabilitation and that criminals are "a breed apart." In fact, she says, criminals are like the rest of us who weigh the risks and consequences of their actions. Thus "these people" (the criminals, a breed apart?) could be effectively deterred by raising the penalties involved in crime. When crime goes without real punishment citizens turn to vigilante justice, i.e. become criminals through frustration. Finally, whether punishment deters or rehabilitates, it is necessary for justice. The protection of society is the all-important need. Individuals must be held responsible for what they do; without individual responsibility there is chaos and we end up denying all of individual freedom.

And so having digested the Digest article from four and a half pages to two with all the perils of "condensing" anything, we can see the 50-year-old formula of the Digest propaganda that reinforces readers:

1. The "Plain Folks" appeal, ego-gratification, reassurance of worth. You may not bother your head about complex social problems but be reassured (hold that head high) that your "common sense" is greater than all the preachy social scientists. (As McLuhan often quotes of the little girl, "The world is so big, stay as you are.") This, we know, is a comforting thought as your old solutions can be trotted out and you can feel as knowledgeable as anyone who has spent years of personal or formal educational toil on such problems. It is instant education we are offering you, painless enlightenment.

2. The Appeal to "a sense of roots." Old things, old ways are better than untried new ways. It becomes an appeal to people with some little stake in society, a job or some property that they fantasize losing if criminals are not permanently put away. Often they confuse criminals with radicals. The status quo rules. The misfit, the unfortunate, the social outcast, the dissenter, the poor, and the experimenting person, are a threat to this smug majority.

3. Such other techniques as "glittering generality," "card-stacking," "scapegoating," "stereotyping," and all manner of appeals to prejudice, fear, insecurity, class, hatreds, sloth, trust, even old-time religion (original sin) are evident, as are sexual repression, revenge, and non-conformity. The violent philosophy is "an eye for an eye" rather than "judge not lest ye be judged" or "love thy neighbour" or the more modern aphorism, "there, but for the grace of God, go I."<sup>10</sup>

As Jacques Ellul has pointed out, modern propaganda often consists of the "half-truth" which could be called the "half-lie" just as well. It is "integration propaganda" in that it maintains the status quo. It starts where the audience is – with its fears and hopes as in

motivational research techniques cited above for selling goods. In Ellul's words again, such propaganda techniques are "a menace which threatens the total personality." It is Vertical Propaganda insofar as it comes from the top down, being one-way advice by the publisher, and his organization. There can be no dialogue because, in McLuhan's words, "When dialogue begins, propaganda ends." Propaganda it must be, as *Reader's Digest*, a pseudo-populist mass magazine, is a class magazine. It represents the interests of, not the millions of devotees who have been influenced by it, but the elite political-economic forces in the United States who want to maintain their hegemony in society and extend it multinationally. Their job is to legitimate that power in a subtle sociological way which they do, as we have observed, by handing people back their hang-ups. The majority had been too conditioned to seek change.<sup>11</sup>

One violence-vending article, however, does not make a case. The other drugs in that June 1976 issue include "Angola's Made in Moscow War" by David Reed, "Cuba's New Militance" from *The New York Times*, and "The Modern Little Red Hen" from *Nation's Business*. The first two articles are the sort of major policy pieces that the Digest has long embedded in its candied contents. They are "Made in USA articles," of the kind that express State Department and Pentagon foreign policy as well as that of the industrial complex.

In the Angola article, an unidentified writer named David Reed says that the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) which has now formed the government of this former Portuguese colony, is backed by only a quarter of the population compared to the three-quarters support for the two other parties. Russian and Cuban intervention made MPLA powerful. The whole evolution is seen as the Russians having "carried out a bold military and political move into another continent," while the U.S. "had no client army that could be put into the field to counter the Cubans. Nor was there time to train the non-Marxist forces in the use of advanced American weapons."<sup>12</sup> Digest readers are told that the most powerful military machine in the history of the world, having just tried out the most ruthless weapons ever invented, and having had a half-million troops in Vietnam, could not "counter" little Cuba. They are not told how the real reason was public opinion against a new foreign adventure like the U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the revelations of the Pentagon Papers and Watergate.

As Prof. John Saul has pointed out in *This Magazine* (April-May 1976), such monstrous oversimplification stems from "the reduction of the full complexity of the situation there to some mere manifestation of 'great power politics'" and the MPLA's "twenty years of political and military struggle are consigned to limbo . . . reduced to some mere manipulation from Moscow . . ." And so on to analyze events there in significant terms, the battle for Southern Africa, involving the

racist state of South Africa itself. Canada's role is an important aspect, something that was not found in this Digest article which, like so many world affairs articles in the Digest's past, sweeps Canadian policy and opinion under the rug or assumes and subsumes it under U.S. policy. The key word in Saul's article is "reduction," and Digest readers are constantly treated as unintelligent without memories of even recent newspaper reading. Their reading of world affairs gives them a sense of serious thought even though the most complex situations, involving all Africa, the world, rivalry in Communist nations, history, politics, and economics are reduced to slogans, fitted into old images, and reduced to plabum.

"Cuba's New Militance" as condensed from the New York Timesman, James Reston, also lines up on the U.S. policy line. The *Times à la Reader's Digest* is alarmed at Cuba's intervention in Angola and "reports" of "contacts with black revolutionary elements elsewhere". It tells how nice the U.S. has been to Cuba lately by "allowing the foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies to sell automobiles, trucks, spare parts and other essential commodities to Havana."<sup>13</sup> The ethno- and ego-centricity of that line is mind-boggling as it means the U.S. will allow Canada to sell to Cuba. But Castro churlishly has not responded to overtures for "normalization" of U.S.-Cuban relations. Reston warns that the Cuban "adventure" in Angola "may finally be wakening Americans up."

It is, of course, a companion piece to the main Angola article and a threat to wreak vengeance on Cuba for having dared to do what the U.S. has done around the world, but for exploitative commercial reasons, and a warning not to counter U.S. ambitions in the Western Hemisphere.

The oracular message of the Titans themselves is to be found in an article, "The Modern Little Red Hen," which is transmitted from Mount Olympus itself: The Chamber of Commerce of the U.S. Its publication *Nation's Business* carries the thunderbolts.<sup>14</sup>

The story is familiar. When the little red hen asks for help the duck says, "out of my classification", the cow says, "I'll lose my seniority," and the goose says, "I'll lose my unemployment compensation." Their comments on baking the bread are changed to "That would be overtime," "I'd lose my welfare benefits," "I'm a dropout and never learned how," and "If I'm to be the only helper, that's discrimination."

When the bread was displayed, "They all wanted some - in fact demanded a share," but the hen said she would eat the five loaves herself. "Excess profits," "Capitalist leech," and "I demand equal rights," they said, painting "unfair" picket signs and marching around shouting "obscenities" until the government came around and said to the hen, "You must not be greedy." When the hen objected that she alone had earned the bread the agent said, "That is the wonderful free enterprise system. Anyone in the barnyard can earn

as much as he wants. But, under government regulations, the productive workers must divide their product with the idle." So they lived happily ever after, "but the little red hen's neighbours wondered why she never baked bread again."

In other words:

1. Anyone on welfare is simply lazy. (That would include deserted mothers, the sick, the disabled, those laid off by industry, et cetera. But it would not include corporations who receive handouts from government, write-offs, accelerated depreciation, expenses, contracts, et cetera.

2. Workers lie around doing nothing while some single individual entrepreneur or several do the work. The immense labour force that produces the staggering productivity of the modern industrial nation is not in the equation.

3. Concerns by workers and unions for job classifications, years of working up to seniority positions, loss of unemployment insurance because of state limitations on extra income, payment for overtime work, education, and non-discrimination are mere excuses not to work, and workers should throw themselves into any enterprise without question.

4. The productive workers now come into the picture and must divide their products with the "idle." Anyone out of work for any reason is still stigmatized as "idle" and should apparently starve.

5. The government forces business and labour to share some of their income with idlers but they will all refuse to work again, i.e. go on strike.

Interestingly enough, a Digest blurb on the article says, "No one really knows who wrote this updated version of the well-known fable. But it has been widely reprinted and even read at shareholders meetings." Ingenuous. Nothing was said about shareholders not lifting a finger to help the little red hen.

The above articles are embedded among the more exciting features of *Reader's Digest* : natural disaster, adventure stories, unforgettable characters (that month Charlotte Whitton), royalty, God and Malcolm Muggeridge, humour, Eskimos, the wonders of technology (Xerox), nature's beauties (butterflies), instant strength (Karate), instant success, relived war ("The Voice of the Veteran"), self-expression, the golden land of "private enterprise" (i.e. corporation), and above all the fast-fast medical cure. The latter staple is still with us, this time a new heart stimulant, with the appropriate magic-word name dobutamine, given to a "lucky farmer" of Ohio, who is called lucky despite the admission that the drug treatment in the clinical trials were at that point "being evaluated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration" and the statement "if approved the drug will be a weapon against congestive heart failure," but adding in tiny type as a footnote: "Dobutamine is not yet on the market in Canada." The reference to Canada would not have appeared a few years before and what was good for

Food and Drug in the U.S. was good enough for Canada, even it turned out to be toxic. But by 1975 the Digest was thoroughly alarmed at the prospect of losing tax privileges and so in March it blatantly repeated the 53-year-old claim that "It presents a monthly digest of the best articles available – chosen from Canadian and international sources for their universality of interest and enduring nature."<sup>15</sup> It cited a *Canadian Facts* survey of November 1974, that showed how 65 per cent of those Digest subscribers polled had disagreed with the proposition that the Digest was "harmful because it promotes a foreign culture and viewpoint." Only 13 per cent agreed somewhat or strongly disagreed. No opinion was voiced by 22 per cent. As these were subscribers, not the general public, it can be said that the survey preached to the committed or to a highly biased sample, the result of which may be read in various ways. One way is that the loaded sample simply revealed the effective brainwashing that occurs as a result of constantly reading the Digest. Those 22 per cent were numb. But even more alarming was the finding, which was interestingly enough, conducted by "Canadian Facts and by the Digest's own market researchers," that 94.5 per cent of its readers said the Digest "was serving the Canadian purpose." But in fact, it is violent at many levels and serves no one well. Marshall McLuhan in *The Mechanical Bride* saw it as "Pollyanna Digest" getting "its meaning from the joyless intensity of commerce" with "the endless use of the Barnum and Ripley technique": that results in harm through "the sheer presence of successful stupidity which commonly blocks and clutters the minds of those who might conceivably prefer something better" . . . who have unwittingly been sold a strait jacket.<sup>16</sup>

It could be argued that the Digest is a freak show for the curious and the gullible. It is little wonder that it could publish from its Montreal office, in 1975, *The Reader's Digest Book of Strange Stories and Amazing Facts*, which places next on some library shelves to *The Guinness Book of Records*.

There is titillation of the human mind in this mélange of the strange and wonderful, watched over by God and Dr. Strangelove with the mushroom cloud and doomsday not far off. As Muggeridge tells us, "It is difficult to resist the conclusion that Western man, wearied of the struggle, has decided to abolish himself."<sup>17</sup> It is the Apocalypse that *Reader's Digest* people seek for an evil world, a Judgment Day in which as good people will enter a heaven far more soporific than even the pages of the Digest.

Violence thus is seen as the ultimate solution, first with signs of disaster in this ungodly sphere. Thus, on Page 30, we have "Hawaii's fire-and-brimstone wonderland" which pretends to be merely touristic, but suggests the holocaust in terms of the Kilauea volcano of awesome proportions, "as tough in graphic illustration of some cosmic moral lesson, heaven and hell

have been placed side by side." (Emphasis added.) Dante could do no better.

The sheer thought of this hell on earth is delightful for the word-smith:

a rumbling, steaming volcanic wasteland surrounded by tranquil fern forests . . . In 1969 the pressure-charged gases and molten rock underlying Kilauea burst out of a rift on its eastern slope, and three months later its fiery lava fountains were soaring up to a height of 1800 feet. Two and a half years later, Kilauea was still spewing and sputtering, filling the flame-red sky with rolling thunder and showering the mountainside with thousands of tons of glowing pumice . . . The explosion of Krakatoa between Java and Sumatra in 1883, for example, set off a tidal wave that drowned 36,000 people. And the eruption of Mt. Pelee in Martinique in 1902 sent a great fireball of toxic gases racing down the mountainside, killing 30,000 in just over a minute.<sup>18</sup>

If that has not quite fascinated the annihilation-seeking readers, they can turn to Guatemala's 39-second Apocalypse which tells us purringly how

the paroxysm ended with nearly 23,000 people crushed to death beneath the rubble of their houses; 76,000 more injured. A million people – one sixth of the nation – homeless . . . some 220,000 dwellings collapsed into splintered timbers and dust . . . the worst natural disaster in Central American history.<sup>19</sup>

One can't escape the feeling that by worst is meant "best". Best for writing, by providing readers with their thrills and vicarious death-wish details to horrify. Moreover, if there is a Dantesque hell on earth there must be God and the saints to counteract these Satanic actions. The author, Scott Seegers, a Latin American reporter, provides them under the heading "Ninety Screaming Infants" insofar as:

Miracles there were . . . Guided by the terrified chorus of infant screams, the night watchman . . . burrowed under the roof. There his flashlight beam disclosed an unbelievable sight. The cribs were tilted and bent, but their steel corner posts held the enormous weight of the roof. With the assistance of a nurse, he crawled under the roof and was able to bring each infant out unharmed.

Earlier he told how an ornate headed-glass coffin containing a life-size figure of the crucified Christ was not even cracked, although 600 had died, the living had lost their homes, and nearly every town in the province was destroyed. However, "the faithful knelt in prayer . . . A miracle they murmured."<sup>20</sup>

It is all there for the western world's largest audience, attractively wrapped up: mom's apple pie, Angola, volcanoes, Armageddon, ailing hearts, karate chops, marriage counsellors, Prince Charles, Xerox, and the Little Red Hen.

Violence of the following kinds has been identified for the reasons stated, summarized herewith:

**1. Warmongering.** Survey by Cirino, 1950 through 1969, as cited, showing 84 articles published on Vietnam of which 81 supported the war and three were neutral. This 81-article advocacy for the most violent war in history was capped in December, 1969, by a Digest

editorial backing the war and an article by Joseph Alsop, "The Vietcong is Losing Its Grip." This was not a defensive war for which our criterion for war mongering violence makes exception. The mongering of Richard Nixon in three articles is only part of the persuasion picture, which includes depiction of the war as being won and as worth winning as in a game, or as an honest lion-hearted struggle. The Pentagon Papers were to show the simplistic Good Guys versus Bad Gugs scenario of this Digest version, and the mendacity of the propaganda.

**4. Vengeance-seeking.** "Portraying in a favourable light vengeance as an acceptable motive, solution, e.g. as a model for a prison." This is identified in the Barbara Amiel article referred to earlier in which heavy prison sentences are favoured and rehabilitation is derided, also vigilante justice (i.e. revenge is alluded to as a possible alternative for prison punishment). Articles on natural disasters (e.g. June 6) portray a God-directed world of vengeance. Muggeridge calls them a "cosmic moral lesson."

**5. Aggression.** Condoning, counselling, inciting, distorting, ignoring for serious analysis or portraying in a sadistic and meaningless way aggression or predator conduct of an interpersonal or group nature.

In addition to the condoning of aggression in Vietnam, as cited, the Digest has condoned aggressive action in Latin American countries such as Guatemala, Cuba, Brazil, and Chile, often in an indirect way in approving a military junta. This is not to mention another species of aggression: an aggressive sales campaign involving drug ads in which reprints were offered to doctor's offices and the material was not marked advertising.

**6. Authoritarianism.** "There is an injunction . . . to social Darwinism in which 'survival of the fittest' is said to apply to modern economic competition, business practices, and even social relations; there is intimidation, incitement to mob or vigilante action." Praise for the Spanish dictator, General Franco, was cited as an example, along with Digest support of McCarthyism.

**7. Dehumanizing.** Word or picture symbols that tend to dehumanize, often through depicting by way of foreshortening one part or one aspect of a person, e.g. skin colour, sex . . . reductionism. "The Modern Little Red Hen" referred to above is an illustration. It represents the old fable of the little red hen as Private Enterprise itself — small and independent — when in fact we know this is as simplistic as the corner grocery store in these days of the supermarket or the old "filling station" long forced out of business as an independent operator by the big oil companies. The workers symbolized in the cow, duck, pig, and goose are portrayed as lazy, careful about their rights, and interested only in the proceeds; the government is shown as the regulating agency that forces productive workers to share their product with the idle. We know that corporations more often cause idleness with layoffs. (Idleness is not sought by the . . .

million unemployed in Canada; multinational corporations can close down a Canadian branch plant and open it elsewhere.)

There are so many false parallels in the old fable, it represents reductionism by analogy to an alarming degree, doing violence to a fine myth of interpersonal moral quality. That this article should be read at shareholders' meetings, as the Digest boasts, is to dehumanize symbolically the hundreds of thousands of people who are suffering from unemployment caused by the very people who are able to make their money work for them.

**8. Sensationalizing.** "Going beyond the real situations for the sake of effect — that is visceral or sensory effect. Overplaying." This is brought out in the June 1976 issue where the Digest described "miracles" to sensationalize the Deity with crude anthropomorphic fail-safe acts, e.g. Guatemala's 39-second Apocalypse wherein "nearly 23,000 people lay crushed to death . . . 76,000 more were injured . . . a million were homeless" and yet "miracles there were" when 90 infants in a Lion's Club hospital were saved.

So-called "miracle cures" by "wonder drugs" in other issues are of the same sensational order.

**9. Revelling, wallowing, glorifying.** This criterion applies to the Digest's glorification of war as mentioned.

**10. Euphemism, underplaying.** . . . using soft language, apologetic for violence that needs to be stated if reform is to take place. The omission of criticism of advertising techniques in a Digest *Esquire* article is an example, underplaying the accomplishments of Franklin Roosevelt is another, and the apologetics represented in such pieces as "United Fruit's International Partners."

**11. Static Violence.** "This violence in which an immovable object is met by an irresistible force . . . entrenched force . . . blocking change, elite control, privilege." This was seen in the Digest anti-New-Deal policy, its opposition to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* at the beginning of the pollution-conscious era, its preponderance of articles opposing amelioration of human conditions through Welfare, Medicare, and labour legislation such as job security ("The Modern Little Red Hen," June 6, 1976).

**12. "Doing Violence to."** This criterion for doing violence to principles, beliefs, identity, truth-value, through deliberate distortion, misinformation, falsification, rumour-mongering, profanation, the tyranny of the majority over the minority is found in the Digest's "planting" of articles to give a false appearance of selection as described, its "card-stacking" of articles on one side of an issue and its virtual ignoring of the liberal and left point of view even when expressed by congressmen and other opinion leaders.

### *Time*

One of the saddening aspects of the long campaign to remove the tax privileges of *Time* magazine in Canada was that it centred almost solely on the advertising issue. That, of course, and regrettably, is a life-and-death issue for all mainline commercial magazines and therefore highly important for the survival and the creation of Canadian magazines. Since Bill C-58 was enacted and *Time* discontinued its Canadian edition (four to eight pages), the circulation has dropped from half a million to about 330,000 according to a *Globe and Mail* report on August 4, 1976. Subscription rates were raised from \$18 to \$30 a year. Its revenue was down by 50 per cent compared to the same month a year before, although *Time* had reduced advertising rates by 60 per cent.

*Time* was not banished from Canada, as some editorial writers said in complete confusion. It is still available in this country in its original form at the rates mentioned, but those who advertise in this American magazine cannot claim their expenditures as a tax deduction. In this way, it is placed on the same footing as any other U.S. magazine, such as its rival *Newsweek*. What it had before was a distinct privilege that only *Time* and *Reader's Digest* enjoyed, after much lobbying and political intrigue doing violence to Canadian sovereignty. The five or so Canadian pages, glorified as a "Canadian edition," were withdrawn by *Time* magazine, which refused to meet the higher requirements of Bill C-58 for Canadian ownership and Canadian content if the designation "Canadian magazine" was to be genuine. But the magazine continues to be sold in Canada and to draw revenue in Canada.

Another very practical reason for removal of the special privileges of *Time* was the unfair competition it offered Canadian magazines. Whereas Canadian magazines had to pay for their editorial material, for every word and picture in the entire issue, *Time* in Canada simply took over the contents of *Time* in the United States for which it paid a bookkeeping figure of 50 cents per subscription and added a few pages of Canadian material. This was cheap content and a practice known in economics as "dumping." It has also

been called "gravy" insofar as the main editorial costs, having been covered and paid for by the U.S. buyers, then yielded additional revenue from Canada. Advertising aimed at the Canadian market was sold on the basis of this façade of Canadianism, the four pages and the dumped foreign section. "Time Canada" was the largest of Time Inc.'s operations in 185 countries. It had a circulation of 550,000 compared with Time Pacific's 335,000, and made \$1.2 million profit in 1973.<sup>1</sup> Laws against dumping of various kinds of goods have been enacted in various countries, as their existence as manufacturing nations is at stake. Tariffs are often anti-dumping measures. With a huge market ten times the size of the Canadian market, U.S. manufacturers of every type of commodity could flood the Canadian market with goods and put many industries out of business, as they could not compete at the prices offered.

Ironically, it is only the economics of the situation that was considered in the campaign against *Time* and *Reader's Digest*, and were it not for the complexity of fiscal policy and international trade any Canadian reader might benefit from receiving editorial material free from another country. In fact, all dumping, like a shower of cheap gifts, would be beneficial. The one catch, even under a radically revised economic system, would be the *quality* of the product, and the *quality* of *Time* as a weekly purveyor of news was and is abysmal. To begin with it is not a "news" magazine in the accepted use of the "news," but a magazine of comment. This is not comment in the ordinary sense of commentary as found in other magazines insofar as it has been disguised as news "the way it is," while the crisp dogmatic style of presentation has been loaded with a half-hidden dimension of language. As Swanberg stated it in his *Luce and His Empire*:

Various combinations of these adjectives and verbs could be used to give an attractive or unlovely coloration and supply the reader with extra drama or amusement. A *trim-figured, keen-brained* politician who *strode in* and *unfolded* his policies had no complaint against *Time*. But a *flabby-chinned, gimlet-eyed* candidate who *shambled* and *snarled* was apt to lose votes. [Emphasis in original.]<sup>2</sup>

The emphasis in words alone might make or break a man, and they had no relation to the reality of the man or the event; they were ideological and the choice of words dependent on whether the man was a good guy or a bad guy in *Time's* jaundiced view. Such words gave the reader a favourable or unfavourable impression of the subject very subtly and so deceived. Mussolini, Hitler, and Franco were all given favourable treatment until near the outbreak of World War II.

Readers – and the readers of *Time* are fairly high up the educational ladder – are deceived by it all and come to believe they are getting an informed view of the world, in fact an “inside” view. Yet *Time's* publisher, Henry Luce, who died in 1967, never told them that *Time* was “objective” or “unbiased.” On the contrary, he disclaimed it occasionally in small type at the front of the magazine and has been quoted as saying “Show me a man who claims he's objective and I'll show you a man with illusions.”<sup>3</sup>

Having deceived so many, however, Luce no doubt deceived himself. The more intelligent reporters and editors know that “objectivity” is impossible, but the good ones strive to present a balanced, fair, and honest report within the capabilities of the situation. These include personal predispositions, cultural bias, haste, availability of information, publishers' and editors' wishes, and the whole “gatekeeping” or processing system of the media. Luce and the editors he brought into line never tried for balance, fairness, or independence of mind. They knowingly and deliberately distorted the news, selecting the “facts” to fit a preconceived formula, a practice known in journalism as “slanting the news.” *Time* became a gospel according to St. Luce, a magazine of missionary zeal for the people who pay for the advertising, Big Business, with all its creed. As an obituary from *The New York Times* and Associated Press said, “He was a staunch Republican, a defender of big business and free enterprise, a foe of organized labour, a steadfast supporter of Chiang Kai-shek and an advocate of aggressive opposition to communism.”<sup>4</sup>

But, of course, these are biases that any publisher might have, and most do. Our concern is with the violence in the man as reflected in *Time*, the magazine he dominated for 44 years. This is not to mention his other magazines, *Life*, *Fortune*, and *Sports Illustrated*, all of which had a world-wide circulation at his death of 14 million. The personal domination of talented people, the methods of “twisting” (distorting) and shaping information, of “editorializing” while pretending to present “the facts” and of falsifying for the sake of propagating an anti-humanistic ideology in violation of the highest principles of free speech – these are what “distinguished” Luce and his publications empire. A study of them and of the man contribute to any study of media manipulations and their effects on people and on society. This is the value of the study, but for Canadians it has the added value of showing the way in which

Canadians believed a Sam Slick and lost part of their identity.

Theodore Peterson in his *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* referred to the founders of magazines following World War I as being “missionaries” and “merchants.” He rated Henry Robinson Luce as a missionary primarily, but of course Luce was both a hard-headed business man and a ruthless missionary in print. His birth in Tengchow, China, in 1898 to Presbyterian missionary parents with a father of fundamentalist bent, whose work in China depended on wealthy American patrons, set the mold for young Henry Robinson. The ethnocentricity of Protestantizing the heathen, the isolation of being in a foreign country but living in a white man's compound, the Boxer rebellion of 1900 and its failure to free China from Western business domination, and then Luce's education at Hotchkiss College and Yale University with charity from a kindly church patron – all these influences spelled dogmatism and intellectual astigmatism for Luce all his life. It was as though he never emerged from that compound.

*Time* first appeared in March 1923 as the product of two young partners, Luce and Briton Hadden, a college friend, who died six years later. They had collected \$86,000 in capital, not exactly a “shoe-string,” as the folklore of *Time* has it. By 1930 the company was grossing more than \$3,000,000 a year in advertising. Later came other magazines, *Tide*, which was sold, *Fortune* in 1930 as a posh business-executive publication, *Architectural Forum* in 1932, then in 1937 *Life* magazine, and finally *Sports Illustrated* in 1954. All were phenomenal financial successes. Innovation and imagination were evident in the creation of these new forms of popular culture. *Life*, with its big spreads of dazzling photography from around the world such as no magazine had ever displayed before, took the public by storm. People lined up to buy a copy and were often unable to get one as subscriptions had to be filled first. The novelty of the picture magazine was like the advent of television a decade later.

*Fortune* arrived as a thick, lavish business magazine on the best of paper with highly-textured covers and illustrations and in a large format, costing \$1 a copy, despite the onset of the Depression. Luce and his friends allowed that the Depression might last a whole year. Even *Architectural Forum*, covering a specialized field, was expensively produced. Time Inc. was launched.

Opposition to *Time* in Canada surfaced in the Twenties and Thirties, although the presence of foreign periodicals in Canada has been an issue since Confederation. Speaking in Parliament on the issue in 1931, Mackenzie King fatuously warned that “if U.S. magazines were taxed in Canada there might be a cutback in tourist trade, since Americans might experience difficulty in obtaining home magazines.”<sup>5</sup> But the Conservative government imposed a duty based on the degree of advertising content. One writer has

observed that "by 1935 the circulation of American magazines in Canada decreased by 62 per cent while Canadian magazine circulation increased by 64 per cent."<sup>6</sup> The tax was revoked by the King government when it resumed power in 1935 and the import of U.S. magazines increased.

In the Forties *Time* penetrated further into the Canadian market by establishing a Canadian desk with a Canadian editor, leading to more Canadian news, then a few pages called a "section," and finally what it called *Time Canada* in 1943, printed in Chicago. It all began by accident, according to the late Arthur Ford, editor of the *London Free Press*, in a column he wrote April 1, 1967. It seems that Robert Elson, while a member of the staff of the *Vancouver Province*, a Southam chain paper, was seated next to Henry Luce at a Washington Press Club dinner, and asked him, "Why do you ignore Canada?" Some weeks later, Elson got a call from Luce asking him to become Canadian editor. He met Luce in New York and was offered a salary far beyond what he was getting from Southam's.

Arthur Ford tells a revealing anecdote in this story of how *Time* came to Canada (or how Canada went to Chicago), "I met several Canadian editors of *Time*. I asked one of them if Luce ever intervened in the Canadian edition. He replied in the negative; he was given a free hand. Then he added, 'When George McCullagh was the owner of *The Globe and Mail*, and apparently trying to direct the political problems of Canada, Mr. Luce asked me to write up Mr. McCullagh . . . I wrote up a picture of George with all his warts. The story was turned over to Mr. Luce. He did not try to rewrite it or alter it, he simply killed it.'"

A new wave of concerned Canadians took up the issue in the Fifties and Sixties. As described by Oliver Clausen in *The Globe Magazine* of July 8, 1967, *Time* had greeted Diefenbaker's election victory in 1957 with enthusiasm in its best Timese style: On Dief's visit to Kennedy in the White House, it reported how "he marched up vigorously and shook hands" and "said firmly," et cetera.

*Time* had no reason to love the Liberals in recent history. In 1956, Finance Minister Walter Harris imposed a 20 per cent surtax on its advertising revenue which cost *Time* a quarter of a million dollars. Diefenbaker came to the rescue when his government lifted the surtax two years later after much lobbying and flattery by *Time*. Clausen noted that "President Eisenhower, close to Henry Luce, had intervened on its behalf during a State visit to Ottawa. The year before Luce himself had visited Ottawa with his executives to present Dief with the original painting used for a cover portrait of himself, complete with large maple leaf."

But in 1960, under pressure from Canadian publishers, Dief appointed a Royal Commission under the publisher of the *Ottawa Journal*, Grattan O'Leary. Under questioning Luce admitted that *Time*, despite its being defined in the Income Tax Act as a Canadian

magazine, was an American magazine. At the hearings, some of the strongest criticisms of *Time* came from former staff members. Edwin Cops, a Canadian on *Time's* New York desk until 1958, said the government should invoke anti-dumping duties against the magazine. Kenneth Johnstone, a Montreal writer who had worked for *Time* in London, said, "It is a subversive force coming into Canada. By allowing it to snare Canadian advertising, we are in fact ironically subsidizing a reactionary policy inimical to Canada's best interests."<sup>7</sup> Their comments harked back to the violence that had been done to other journalists by *Time* in years past.

It had also been done to various politicians. Trade Minister George Hees was sneered at in 1961 by *Time* for "brash assurance" that "Canada couldn't do business with better businessmen anywhere than in Cuba." As Cuba was an American enemy for having dared to declare independence from U.S. domination, Canada's stand was a red flag in Luce's nostrils. *Time* worked tirelessly for Canadian membership in the Organization of American States, saying this policy "gains Canada few friends down south." In fact, the opposite was true as South American governments and populations welcomed Canada's positive stand that did not always countenance blockades, CIA intrigues, and imperialist manoeuvres, as later revealed in the Watergate and Senatorial hearings. *Time* wanted Canada to join the American club, OAS, a league formed to out-vote the Latin-American republics. *Time* sneered: "For all its huge sense of commitment to the international life . . . Canada continued to stand aloof in its own hemisphere last week." The message, Oliver Clausen says, "was clear – break off trade with Cuba and others on Washington's black-list."

Thus the "Canadian section" of *Time* expressed the U.S. point of view. To get "Canadian" businessmen's views it often quoted executives of U.S.-owned subsidiaries.

In 1963 it wrote of "Diefenbaker's discredited administration" as "he saw the writing on the Wall for the resurgence of the Liberal forces under Pearson. His self-martyrdom is wearing thin," *Time* said. After Pearson's victory, it said "an able man was offered a chance to do what he asked." The sub-heading was "The Air is Cleaner," and it added: "Canadians had fallen in line behind a miracle man in 1958, but he had not worked miracles." Of course *Time* too had fallen in line behind the Chief and rejected Pearson, whom it once called "Nehru in a Homburg." That was because *Time* disapproved of Canadian foreign policy as not in line with U.S. foreign policy, and tried to turn Canadians against their government's policies in favour of American imperialism.

Although O'Leary was Diefenbaker's appointee, the Conservative government did nothing about the O'Leary report aside from pious pronouncements. Meanwhile *Time* manoeuvred well by starting to print

the "Canada edition" in Montreal in 1962, as *Reader's Digest* was doing. When the Liberals went back into power in 1963, they were faced with the problem; it fell into the lap of Walter L. Gordon as Finance Minister.

Significantly, media control has been considered in a class like banking in Canada – and unlike most other parts of the economy; some media fall under federal law requiring this control to be exercised by Canadian nationals. Obviously the feeling has been akin to that of Harold Innis, the Canadian historian who wrote of Western civilization as being profoundly influenced by communication, or in the words of Graham Spry, co-founder of the Canadian Broadcasting League: "Nay, communication is not merely an instrument, it is an integral and paramount element of both human individual and human social life. Who controls information, controls society."<sup>9</sup>

At any rate, Gordon, noting that broadcasting in Canada was under federal law, tried in the Spring of 1965 to extend the principle to cover magazines. Such legislation was passed, but incredibly, *Time* and *Reader's Digest* were exempted on the basis that they were being printed in Canada. Gordon wrote:

Many people were unhappy about the exemption for *Time*. Its preferred position makes the establishment of new Canadian magazines more difficult. The matter came up at a time when the automobile agreement was under heavy attack in Congress. Approval of the agreement might have been jeopardized if a serious dispute with Washington had arisen over *Time*. In the circumstances, I believe the decision to grant the exemption was realistic. Nevertheless, steering this part of the legislation through the House of Commons, and explaining the reason for the exemption to the Liberal Party caucus, was one of the most unpalatable jobs I had to do during my period in government.<sup>10</sup>

The power of *Time* in the councils of America, in the White House with presidents as lobbyists and in the business world had never been set forth so nakedly. Even a Canadian finance minister could not prevail against that power, especially when it became an object of international horse-trading between unequals. The Royal Commission Report of 1961 had recognized that magazines were a potentially vital instrument for the forging of a Canadian culture and were in danger of extinction; it recommended changes, the most important of which was to end the tax deductions for advertising in foreign-owned magazines. Despite all this effort at the top and from many professionals in the media field, *Time* got its way. Up to that point *Time* had not shaped up but was not shipped out. *Time* was doing violence to Canadian sovereignty, culture, and magazine economics – thus presenting an immovable object that blocked a seemingly irresistible force (Violence 7) along with its history of warmongering (Violence 1) and social retrogression.

The irresistible force was expressed again in the 1970 Report of the Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media, chaired by Keith Davey. The Davey Committee saw the magazine situation in a more significant light

than even the O'Leary Commission, which was more specifically devoted to magazines. Under "The Troubled Magazines" it wrote:

Magazines are special. Magazines constitute the only national press we possess in Canada. Magazines add a journalistic dimension which no other medium can provide – depth and wholeness and texture, plus the visual impact of graphic design. Magazines, because of their freedom from daily deadlines, can aspire to a level of excellence that is seldom attainable in other media. Magazines, in a different way from any other medium, can help foster in Canadians a sense of themselves. In terms of cultural survival, magazines could potentially be as important as railroads, airlines, national broadcasting networks and national hockey leagues. But Canadian magazines are in trouble. The industry may not be dying, but it is certainly not growing...<sup>11</sup>

It was abundantly evident by then, 1969, that cultural violence was being done, with Canadians buying 130.5 million copies of American magazines a year compared to 33.8 million copies of Canadian magazines. In the vanguard was *Reader's Digest*, whose circulation had grown from approximately a million in 1969 to one and a half million in 1975. About half of the \$34,252,114 advertising revenue going to the 12 members of the Magazine Association of Canada by 1975 was going to *Time* and the *Digest*. Twenty years before it had been 37 per cent of the revenue for 12 major magazines; back in 1948 the two had accounted for 18 per cent.<sup>12</sup>

The Davey Committee faced formidable "inside" opposition, as there had been a dramatic about-face in the support of Canadian magazine publishers, notably Maclean-Hunter. They had fought for and endorsed the recommendations of the O'Leary commission on 1961, but in 1969 they spoke up in favour of special status for *Time* and *Reader's Digest*. In the interval, the Magazine Association of Canada had been formed, which included both *Time* and the *Digest* plus the Maclean-Hunter interests, *Saturday Night*, *Toronto Life*, and other magazines. A writer for *Books in Canada* explained:

Having found a way to live with the two American-controlled giants, Canadian members of the Magazine Association were understandably opposed to any further changes that might jeopardize their precarious stability.<sup>13</sup>

The Magazine Advertising Bureau joined the chorus for *Time* and *Reader's Digest*. However, the Davey Committee recommended repeal of their tax privileges:

The Committee considered several options. The first was simply to leave the status quo alone... another option was to recommend legislation that would prevent *Time* and *Reader's Digest* from publishing their magazines and accepting advertising in Canada. Kick them out. Send them home. Their American editions would still be available in Canada, but only as overflow circulation. As competitors for Canadian readers they would be welcome. As competitors for Canadian advertising dollars, they would be expelled... But the Committee rejected this option too... That led us to a third option, the one we now recommend. Not surprisingly, it is exactly what O'Leary wanted nine years ago: we recommend that the

exemption now granted *Time* and *Reader's Digest* under Section 12a of the Income Tax be repealed, and the sooner the better.<sup>14</sup>

In reference to option two, the Report showed how little understanding or concern it had for the violence to identify done Canadians when it referred to *Time* and the *Digest* as "two corporations that have done business in Canada for nearly three decades and done it with flair and fairness and excellence." As we hope to have shown in this paper, *Time* and *Reader's Digest* have been markedly unfair and anything but excellent. Flairness, perhaps.

It was possibly one clause in the Davey Report's comments that finally provided the government with a *modus operandi* in dealing with the issue:

We recommend that if events warrant it, *Time* and *Reader's Digest*, as a condition of publishing their magazines in Canada, be required to sell 75 per cent of the stock in their Canadian subsidiaries to Canadian residents, and that three quarters of their officers and directors be Canadian residents.<sup>15</sup>

What the Canadian government finally brought itself to do was to give *Time* and *Reader's Digest* in Canada the right to be Canadian magazines as defined by the Income Tax Act if they sold 75 per cent of their stock to Canadian residents and published a magazine that was 80 per cent unlike any foreign magazine. That was actually not a requirement for Canadian content and got around the notion of a government controlling the press in any way. *Reader's Digest*, already 30 per cent Canadian-owned, decided to become Canadian in the Canada edition and was given some months to do so. What *Time* decided to do on its own was a free decision to be a truthfully American magazine without Canadian tax privileges. As the Davey Report pointed out:

The other possibility is that, instead of acquiescing to the 75 per cent requirement, *Time* and *Reader's Digest* would pick up their marbles and go home. That's what we think should have happened ten years ago. If it did happen this time around, it would be the companies' decision, not the government's.<sup>16</sup>

And so the Senate Committee and later the government avoided any suggestion that it was using a big stick, i.e. a form of violence, on these violence-prone magazines. The action was accomplished because other forces such as the Canadian Periodical Publishers Association for independent Canadian magazines became active. While the magazine establishment publishers had been brought into submission by *Time* and *Reader's Digest* through the Magazine Association of Canada and their own impotence, the Davey Committee was also hearing from writers, photographers, art directors, editors, production people, and others working in the magazine field. The Report said:

... a group of non-Magazine Advertising Bureau editors and publishers circulated a statement calling for removal of the exemption, and urged media people who endorsed the statement to make their views known to the Committee. Some 364 people representing 168 publications did so.<sup>17</sup>

But even as late as October, 1974, Paul Steuwe in *Books in Canada* noted:

Whatever their deficiencies as Canadian magazines, however, and regardless of the fact that they are the greatest single obstacle to a viable national periodical press, putting an end to the special status of *Time* and *Reader's Digest* will still require some pretty massive agitation by the Canadian public. But the climate does seem to be right for just such an effort: the U.S. has been preoccupied with domestic strife and the Trudeau administration has just been returned with a solid majority. Now is the time to act decisively by removing the *Time* and *Reader's Digest* tax exemption, and thereby wipe clean this disgraceful history of perpetual equivocation and compromise. Cultural Sovereignty, yet!<sup>18</sup>

The concatenation of events was there, the effort was made and the result was positive.

*Time* began to change character somewhat when Luce died in 1967 and following the famous "staff revolt" at a meeting in Bermuda shortly after, it improved. But for its past record it must be rated as violent by most of our criteria. Today, it is relatively non-violent. The May 31, 1976, issue has articles on Communist party strength in Italy, but it is lacking in most of the jingoism of the old Luce issues, except for the word "seize" in relation to initiative, a slight echo of the old anti-Red associative wordage, and "the party boss," with the old-time attention to irrelevant details, e.g. "Sipping from a scotch and water," and "his chauffeur-driven nut-coloured Fiat." The slickness is there in a story on Ethiopia, "A land of Anarchy and Bloodshed," and one on Mobutu of Zaire. Both are fairly innocuous. A very humanistic article on "Doing Violence to Sport" is commendable for its enlightened view of hockey violence. This "Time Essay" even quotes the Ontario government's report on hockey violence in Canada. There is no great depth in this issue of *Time*, but no violence. In a few years, at this rate of progress, the magazine might gain some credibility.

## Chapter Eleven

### *Maclean's*

A survey of recent covers of *Maclean's* magazine leads to the conclusion that these are often the modern adult equivalent of the English Penny Horribles. Picture books for grown-ups. Instead of the wolf who gobbled up Little Red Riding Hood and grandma, the Beast of "Beauty and the Beast," or the Ogre who roared after Jack, we have in the February, March, and May, 1976, issues of *Maclean's* as cover pictures, the clenched fists of middle-class workers in revolt, the leather-jacketed machine gunner depicting "The Jackal" who killed and kidnapped Arab leaders at an OPEC meeting the previous December, and the dark shadowed figure of an IRA terrorist in Belfast complete with revolver aimed point-blank at the reader.<sup>1</sup>

While a survey of student opinion showed majority dislike of these violence-depicting covers, there may well be some attraction in this kind of cover on the news-stands, and perhaps at that sales point, an attraction greater than non-violent covers. The buyers could be adults seeking the thrills and chills of children's "fairy tales," and so might represent a continuation of interest generated at an impressionable age. "Tell me a scary story," the little girl told her father.

In the "Jackal" cover of the March 22 *Maclean's* we do not have Violence 8 – violent language and pictures for non-violent situations – as the death-kidnapping act was certainly violent, but we do have Violence 9, verisimilitude "revelling in the violence." This is plainly brought out in the editorial note on page one, the contents page, accompanied by small illustrations of two hand-guns, which reads:

Despite the fact that he kills people, or perhaps because of it, Illich (for V. Illich Lenin) Ramirez Sanchez, alias "Carlos," alias "The Jackal," has captured the popular imagination. He's daring, handsome, mysterious, but most of all he's dangerous...<sup>2</sup>

The killer is obviously glamourized and glorified. The article itself continues the dramatization:

The British press loves to dress its villains in nick-names, and a few months ago, when they needed an appropriate monicker for the world's most wanted man, there was... the main character of the British best-selling thriller, Frederick Forsyth's *The Day of the Jackal*, and they gave it to the man who stands

these days at the very pinnacle of world terrorism... He has been scorned as the Jesse James of the Seventies in France, where he is wanted for murder. In Venezuela, where he was born, he has been compared to Simon Bolivar, the hero of the independence war against Spain...<sup>3</sup>

In these passages, life imitates art and people are desensitized by confusing the two. A touch of James Bond also helps to serve that function, "He (The Jackal) is an insatiable playboy. By their own admission he had at least four girl friends at the same time over the past many months..." Female readers are thus afforded an opportunity of identification with the global gangster moll of the Seventies, projecting them through the pages into the monster's embrace, like Beauty or the heroine of King Kong. In both cases the Beast is always gentle as fantasy usurps reality. Vicarious adventure is always safe and fantasy is often a nightmare in which the dreamer awakes from the wild night ride of the mare.

The remainder of the March 22 issue of *Maclean's* is unlike the lurid, romanticized story of The Jackal. Its "Explore Canada '76 Tours" is particularly praiseworthy. Other articles, interviews and comments – pieces on Ed Schreyer, Bud Drury, The Sky Shops, world affairs, and potpourri are even-toned, reflective, and thoroughly Canadian. They could never have appeared in *Time*.

The selection for our survey issue of February 9 provided a striking contrast in cover choice. It was "Trudeau in Cuba" in a handshaking ceremony with Fidel Castro and others, a pleasant cover backed up by a cover story, "The Cuban Connection," that was not the usual jingoistic cold-war banality on Cuba found in the U.S. magazines. Other contents were on a par, except for a "Preview" heading on the Olympics, "Some come to run, others to kill, maim and terrorize." In the light of a very peaceful Olympics, the overdrawn heading is obviously just another attempted trigger of the readers' emotions.

A heading is again the main offender in Ian Urquhart's article on the Conservative leadership convention, to be held ten days thence. "Bloody Sunday" is the title, and it refers to the day in 1967

when Stanfield took over from Diefenbaker, which was not a major theme of the article.

We have, therefore, in this February 9 issue, Violence 8 – violent language for non-violent situations, sensationalism. However, the article itself does not employ this purple prose. It is well to be reminded by Harry Bruce in that same issue of *Maclean's* about

All the Muck that's fit to rake" or how "dirty rumors come true in the end . . . the paranoid leftist editor with his fantastic charges about telephone taps, killers and crooks in the capital . . . those creeps actually turn out to have been right. That's the political horror of our time but politicians go on talking as though the real problem is a malevolent press . . . The more rotten the events, the more urgent the need to describe them right away.

The rumours that led to the Watergate disclosures, the revelations on the invasion of Cambodia, on Nixon's other machinations, the CIA in Chile and everywhere else, on Gerda Munsinger, on Candu sales – all these were once called "sensationalism." Yet there were many more rumours that did not come true and many molehills reported in magazine "scoops" as mountains. The conclusion to be taken from this is that some so-called "sensationalism" may be just that – so-called – and very close to the truth; may not be an exaggeration at all, but in fact an underplaying of the truth.

*Maclean's* cover picture of the IRA terrorist (May 3 issue) becomes an attempt to sell, a blurb, that is out of proportion to the contents and therefore sensationalist – but the cover story inside, "A little bit of hell" is anything but sensationalist. The words and pictures can never really do justice to a civil war that has lasted eight years and produced some of the worst horrors of the present age. There is no glorification in Hubert de Santana's article, no drama being pumped in, as there is no need of it. Some telescoping, perhaps, but even this is hard to equate with the real violence in Northern Ireland.

Here it is necessary to make a distinction between "drama violence" and "news violence." Many who deplore "violence in the media" including some media experts, make use of a very wide brush. But the manufactured violence that is fiction, whether on television as stereotyped drama, in the few magazines that publish fiction, or in tabs such as *Midnight*, should not be evaluated in the same way as news. News writers of integrity try to get at reality or the truth, no matter how mercurial, whereas fiction writers attempt to excite the imagination – sometimes of course for a deeper "truth" but seldom claiming to be reporters of fact. The news magazines thus, like the newspaper, must be evaluated differently. It can be said that violence in the news should not be deplored in the way we do deplore the violence of Kojak or of Archie Bunker. People may not be exposed to enough violence in their access to news, whereas they are over-exposed to third-rate entertainment violence. News cameras cannot capture the full horror of much real violence in society because they

are seldom there when the horrors are committed as in the torture chambers of prisons around the world – from the Gulag Archipelago to Northern Ireland. Who would expect to see on television news or in printed news photos what Hubert de Santana described in the May 3 issue of *Maclean's*, "A little bit of hell"?

In Fermanagh, one of the six counties of Northern Ireland, a Catholic butcher was found shot dead, impaled on meat hooks in his own refrigerator. He had been castrated, his testicles crammed into his mouth.<sup>4</sup>

And similar atrocities are being committed against men and women in Chile at this moment, to say nothing about the official depravities in over thirty countries of the world where torture is an administrative policy, as reported by Amnesty International.<sup>5</sup>

While words may be printed, pictures cannot, neither moving nor still. If they were used, a shuddering but newly aware public would cry for their removal. Millions of escape artists would blame the mirror for what it reflects, the seamy and sadistic side of life. The phones of news editors would be jammed with calls against publishing such violence in picture form, after which the placated caller could settle back to view the pleasant violence of *Starsky and Hutch* with perfect peace of mind. But the IRA gun pointing at you on the cover is uncomfortable, too true to life, horribly realistic. Now you are not, in Tom Wolfe's words, "with the muscle, with the gun" but rather with "the rare occasion in which the gun is emptied into the camera – i.e. into your face – the effect is so startling that the pornography of violence all but loses its fantasy charm."<sup>6</sup>

Yet it will depend in large part on how that violent news event is handled. With headlines and dramatic leads, "stories" that fragment the event and fail to provide context, and pictures poorly related to that context, the news becomes an imitation of drama like the *Maclean's* item on "The Jackal" and what the Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media called mere "hassle and strife" with entrapment in "conflict, surprise, drama . . . the shooting, the rioting – and not enough on the quiescent but visible situations which could spell trouble later on."<sup>7</sup> This comment is, however, related to television news and to newspaper news of the day, rather than newsmagazine presentation. In the newsmagazine, there is more scope for documentary in-depth treatment of the news with more perspective and social concern. It is unfortunate, then, that the western world's leading newsmagazine, *Time*, along with *U.S. News and World Report* and, on occasion, *Newsweek*, have been warmongering magazines of narrow perspective. Whereas the new *Maclean's* as a newsmagazine may dramatize violence to sell copies, it rates only 9 on our violence scale (revelling).

## Chapter Twelve

# Good Begets Good

There has always been a school of thought that "good begets good," that "positive thought" has power and that power is to win friends and influence people (regardless of the end in mind). On the other side of the coin, bad or unwholesome or critical thinking produces evil. The philosophy is one that ranges from Pollyanna's rose-coloured glasses on the world and the reward of virtue to empirically tested cause and effect. In its origin, the idea that like image begets like image is shamanism and other forms of primitive psychology. In his trance-like state and disguise the shaman used gibberish and archaic words to exorcise the devil in the sick man. The shaman, like the Indian medicine man, was not regarded as the source of power and wisdom, but rather as a medium merely interpreting a supernatural source.

All this may be seen as superstitious nonsense today, but in fact the belief that words have a magical quality has not disappeared. There are still tabooed words and expressions in the most sophisticated societies, and people in many walks of life believe that there is a connection between words and things. "Speak of the devil and he is sure to appear," mention a person you dislike or fear and he is sure to arrive. Make a statement like "My car hasn't had engine trouble for two years now" or say to a fellow passenger in a plane, "I've never had a plane accident in my life," and you hastily add: "Knock on wood." This is the magic word of mythology. People are still uneasy about phrases like "When I die" and so as not to conjure up the spectre of death will deceive "Death" by saying "When I'm not around" or use some such ambiguity or euphemism that Death will not understand.

The power of any medium to produce a response in a self-fulfilling way may be seen in contemporary media studies. It is said, however, to be a climate that produces a like climate in human response, rather than specific words. An interesting example of that thesis is provided by Stephen Holloway and Harvey Hornstein in their article "How Good News Makes Us Good" in *Psychology Today* of December 1976.<sup>1</sup> The researchers in 1968 constituted a team from the social psychology department at Columbia University's Teachers College.

Their project started with the dropping of wallets on the street and the discovery that about 45 per cent of the finders returned them to their owners within a couple of days.

They write: "Then an extraordinary thing happened. Not a single one of the wallets dropped on June 4 was returned." During the night Robert F. Kennedy was killed by an assassin, as the public soon learned through the media. "It damaged whatever social bonds had caused people to return those lost wallets. It demoralized people and made them socially irresponsible."

Since then, the writers have conducted extensive research on the effect of news broadcasts on people's willingness to help others. "Our findings . . . suggest not only that the media influence our daily moral actions but generally that altruism in individuals probably rises or falls with the altruism, or lack of it, in social events that may not touch us directly." Even an unimpressive human-interest story on radio can influence a person's beliefs about human nature. In one experiment news about a murder, bad news generally, made people "negative" and they thought less of their fellows than those who heard "good news" in the experiment. Behaviour could be changed; people who heard good news worked cooperatively in an experiment while the "bad news" people became more competitive. Neither group, of course, knew what the experiment sought.

In another experiment, Elizabeth Lakind of Columbia showed that one group of women who had listened to good news on the radio, then read a summary of a legal case on a man accused of murder, were more likely to find the man innocent than the "bad news" listeners. Interestingly enough, those in the experiment were hardly aware of having listened to the news on radio at all when asked about it after the experiment. There is thus an unconscious or subliminal aspect about the effect of news.

Again, the researchers point up the significance of their findings as "Bad news breaks this social bond. It teaches us that other people are not like us." Bad news tends to de-socialize people, at least temporarily. Distinctions between "we" and "they" are found not to remain fixed and "they shift with the course of social

events and with information about those events.” Hornstein’s recent book *Cruelty and Kindness* is quoted: “There is nothing inherent in any distinction between human beings that compels us to see others as they.” That would tend to counter the believers in the “badness” of “human nature” as in criminals, say, to say nothing of the idea that human nature itself is a fixed entity impervious to any beneficial influences. It finally goes beyond “Do Unto Others” by dissolving the concept of “others.” But the authors conclude “... certain news stories can demoralize and estrange us from one another. We believe that this finding places a new and heavy responsibility on the news media.”

Observations similar to these, but coming from another medium – music – were expressed in the December 25 issue of *The Globe and Mail* in a feature article by Paul McGrath, “Fan Power: giving as good as they get.” He wrote:

The aura you send out returns to you in your audience. The music you play determines the types of person you will attract ... a musician has the power to demand an audience to think or black out or reach any psychological state in between ... some attract people who throw sparklers, firecrackers or smoke bombs down onto their friends. [Rock music] speaks to something below the conscious level.

Working on that level, the easiest things to exploit are sex and violence ... The violence can be physical or psychological, real or imagined ... the bands play on mock violence and receive it in return as the crowd responds militantly to what is in musical complexity and psychological effect nothing more than a snarly football cheer [that] ends with “kill, kill, kill!”

... If a performer works on wrapping sex and violence in music, the music takes on a secondary function; the looming presence of what is being taught consumes the environment ... Pick another name out of a hat and it’s possible to forecast a peaceful, almost saintly crowd by comparison ... performers who speak to the individual as a single emotional unit, rather than as a member of a steaming mass with lynch-mob potential ...<sup>2</sup>

We have returned to *The Praise of Folly* but the subtle connection between performer (speaker) and audience is vividly seen in a new light as an interaction in which the communicator and audience are linked in likeness, in reciprocating loops. The aura here is music; in the Columbia experiment it was an aura of news. It would seem in the words of the psalmist, “We become what we behold.”

If the experiment and the observations are true, people can be programmed with a diet of good news which would serve like the tranquilizing pills in Huxley’s *Brave New World*. The first task, however, is to determine what is “good” and what is “bad” in news. Unfortunately, the old aphorism is still true that “one man’s meat is another man’s poison,” and in fact sometimes the meat and the poison go together as in the case of the man who defined “mixed feelings” as “watching your mother-in-law drive your new car over a cliff.” Of course, behavioural scientists must be aware of the role that “selective perception” plays in media

messaging of any sort, whereby the same message means different things to different people and can be distorted to mean what the receiver wants it to mean. Was it good news or bad news that the MPLA defeated other forces to form the government of Angola (see the chapter on *Reader’s Digest*)?

Is it good news or bad news that national growth may decline? It depends on whether you support “limits to growth” – conservation – findings or believe in “progress.” Was it good news or bad news that the Olympics were held in Montreal in 1976? To some it was a bonanza, to others a disaster, and to still others a so-so event. Was it good news or bad news that the Parti Quebecois won the Quebec election last year?

There are, of course, “human interest” stories that almost everyone will applaud – acts of kindness to little old ladies, the child who was saved from drowning, et cetera. But even human aid to the aged or the poor can be twisted out of shape by the hawks into “Welfare statism”.

“Independence” is a “purr” word, to use S. Hayakawa’s terminology, when it applies to us, but for others it may become a “snarl” word, as in the case of Cuban independence. That radio message the Columbia researchers speak of is a thousand messages. Only a small fraction can be defined as “good news or bad news” for all.

We must also bear in mind that “bad news” is necessary for the “social bonds” of the future. Feared changes announced in the news may afflict the comfortable but comfort the afflicted. They promise a healthier and more just society for many. Most people regard social change as bad news. The news that was the Vietnam War was devastating, but it had to be told and perhaps to be told in even more violent details than it was in order to wake the conscience of the world.

Still, we could use more positive news – human achievements, worthy failures, kindnesses, and non-record, no-growth, but greater satisfaction stories in our news. Stories of beauty but not beauty contests.

# Newspaper Magazine Supplements

### *Weekend Magazine*

#### *The Canadian*

*Weekend* magazine grew out of *The Standard*, which was published by *The Montreal Star* as a separate magazine enterprise and placed on the news-stands across Canada. Its rival in this field of the tabloid-sized national weekly was *The Toronto Star Weekly*, which had been publishing since 1910. Articles on Canadian social issues, often of an incisive or investigative nature, made *The Standard* journalistically outstanding, but it was unable to reach the circulation heights of the *Star Weekly*. Then in 1951, it decided to emulate the marketing pattern of such U.S. magazines as *Parade* and *This Week* and so converted *The Standard* into a weekly supplement called *Weekend*. It was inserted in daily papers across Canada on Fridays or Saturdays, and represented as each paper's own product with its name printed on the cover. (We recall a Letter to the Editor of the *London Free Press* praising the *Free Press* for the fine content of *Weekend* which, of course, was out of their hands.) *Weekend* was and is printed in Montreal on a press owned by *The Montreal Star*, which itself is no longer an independent newspaper but part of the Free Press chain.

As *Weekend* began appearing in more and more newspapers its build-in circulation obtained a free ride with the circulations of all the host papers, and it soon overtook and passed the *Star Weekly*. Naturally this did not sit well with *The Toronto Star* and so in 1965 it made an arrangement with the Southam chain to publish a rival supplement called *The Canadian*, and created Southstar Limited for that purpose.

Most of the Southam papers that had been inserting *Weekend* dropped it and thereby cut into its circulation, but Canada's other big chain, FP Publications, owned by the Sifton company and the heirs of the late Max Bell, the oil magnate, stayed with *Weekend*. The two supplements emerged in this competition for the Canadian weekend reading market with almost identical circulations – around the two million mark. At one point when the local daily paper dropped *Weekend* and inserted *The Canadian* in its stead, *Weekend* mailed out free copies to people in that area. That was, of

course, to maintain advertising contracts that had been signed for a year. *Weekend* also published *Perspectives* for the French-language press.

Meanwhile, the 64-year-old *Star Weekly* was placed in the position of rivalling a supplement it had helped to produce, *The Canadian*, and so this once-robust magazine was mercifully killed off by being submerged in the Southstar company. It was inserted in *The Canadian* (which was itself an insert) in withered form: three sections, Canadian Panorama (news features), a third-rate novel, and comics. For a while a double-barrelled name, *The Canadian/Star Weekly*, was used.

It does seem ironic that these competing chain-supplements, *The Canadian*, *Weekend*, are run off the same press in Montreal – that of the old *Standard*. The two rivals became bedfellows in the printing plant, but they also took another opportunity to share the same shower by creating an advertising sales agency called Magna Media to sell ads for both supplements. The ad agency, as subsidiary for not only *The Canadian*, *Weekend*, but *Canadian Homes*, *Perspectives*, and a Sunday version of *Perspectives* known as *Perspectives-Dimanche*, was in a nice position if it chose to provide advertisers with a beautiful package deal. Competition for other magazines or potential newcomers would be tough.

What has happened to these magazine supplements as a result of this "cooperative competition" of chains? Has there been any indication of an effect related to violence in the media? In the March 1974 issue of *Media Probe*, the author of this paper wrote: "Today, they are both mediocre. Four causes may be cited: (1) The division of the profit pie between the supplement companies and the local newspaper owners as the latter demanded bigger slices with the result that not enough money goes into editorial excellence. (2) The supplement is actually a give-away not sought by all readers and thus, coming into homes uninvited, it is not as highly valued by them or by advertisers as a paid subscription magazine would be. (3) The automatic circulation increase leads to a built-in law of mass media, that the bigger the circulation the more conservative the content as editors respond to a large common

denominator. (4) Backward-marching publishers of many dailies become censors who have the power to throw the supplement out of their papers if they find the articles are too outspoken. As the Biggest Journalistic Gun in Town, the local publisher perceives the Supplement as The Stranger. Even in more independent days, the Stranger anticipated Bigmouth and seldom or never showed his gun. Now he's in the family.

"In U.S. weekly supplements such as *This Week* this circuit of Communication and Feedback, whether overt or inferred, has proceeded to the point where the magazine has become mush . . ."

Since then, they remain mostly mush but with an occasional good article. Both at times read like a print version of *Hockey Night in Canada*. Both are thin, emaciated, ad-messy excuses for magazines. *Star Weekly* and *Standard* editors would blanch at these offspring. *Weekend* has recently varied the mush diet with a little of the red meat of violence.

Survey: *Weekend Magazine*, May, 1976, Vol. 25, No. 22.

The cover shows a dead baby seal on a blood-covered ice floe with a teaser line, "The Seal Hunt: A Morality Play On Ice." Inside, on page 4, the cover-story, "Seals and Sinners" by S.D. Cameron, begins, while on page 5 we find assorted pictures of seal slaughter with blood-and-guts depiction. The language is in key with the pictures, equally violent: "On the ice floes north and east of Newfoundland, a man raises a blood-soaked bludgeon. He brings it down sharply, and with a sound like a dropped pumpkin, the baby seal's skull splits open."

The article tells how Brian Davies's International Fund for Animal Welfare organized helicopter landings of a group of stewardesses into the middle of a Norwegian seal hunt, similar to an operation Davies had carried in 1967.

A stewardess is quoted as saying: "What he's doing is sexy . . . so many women these days are bored and revolted by the traditional male thing, you know . . . going out in the woods and proving your manhood by killing animals, that they really get turned on by someone who saves animals."

Davies comments: "Many men go out (seal hunting) in a spirit of . . . male, ah . . . macho . . ."

And the page 6 descriptions should be noted: "It's like a battlefield. As far as you can see, the ice is splashed with blood . . . the Sealer raises a blood-soaked club . . . with a soft thump like a muffled drumbeat, the bat crushes the seal's skull. Thick crimson blood spurts from the whitecoat's eyes, mouth, nose," and the details of the skinning process such as "innards steaming in the cold."

Then, on page 10, we have this quotation from a man involved in the violence, a Newfoundland sealer: "I don't like to bet (beat) t'ese animals," he says, his face smeared with dried blood. "To me it's a dollar."

On page 5, "The mother seal smearing the guts and muscle of her pup across the little patch of ice."

Following are our analyses of the "violences" as related to the Commission's definition<sup>1</sup> with additions by us (not to be confused with our *criteria* for determining Violence 1, 2, 3 et cetera in media.

A. *Violence in Life*: 1. It is action which intrudes harmfully into the physical well-being of animals, and possibly the psychological being of the killer. 2. Point 2 does not apply. 3. It is obvious. 4. It is by human design. 5. It is against principles of ecology, animal life. 6. It is justified as clothing need. 7. It is real. 8. It is sudden.

B. *Violence in Media*: 1. Print, picture, and type are used 2. It corresponds to reality. Picture and print symbol – verisimilitude. 3. Reaches large numbers (about 2 million) cf. very few in real life. 4. Use of devices, e.g. headlines, colour, does NOT amplify, probably lessens in the sense of "reduced cues," of symbolism. 5. No harm to general public, only to industry, may have impact on legislation, and perhaps on people's attitudes; no cathartic effect; may have a socially redeeming effect in terms of people's kindness to animals and/or ecological effect in terms of slaughter of a species.

### Comment

In reference to the above, it may be seen that in the *Weekend* article, the symbolism (depiction) of seal-hunting in pictures and print is close to a one-to-one correspondence with reality, that it does not go beyond this attempt at verisimilitude (defined as very similar, like the truth, having the semblance of truth) and in fact in semantic theory can be taken only as a reduction by cues. It does not "sensationalize" in the sense that it exaggerates for the sake of effect. Anyone engaging in the bloody slaughter of the seal-hunt would regard the pictorial and word depictions of this article as being very pale indeed next to the experience itself. Does this article brutalize people or alert them to a reality that is unpleasant, the censoring of which might serve only to anaesthetize them?

We are not judging the real-life situation as good or bad; only the symbolic portrayal of the reality as in correspondence with it or not (i.e. sensational) and whether this involves elements of violence that may be judged as anti-social in unnecessarily portraying a person or situation or event in a way that may be detrimental to people, i.e. by dehumanizing them unnecessarily. The word "unnecessarily" is used because the defence of oneself, one's family, or one's nation, or a principle such as anti-slavery may require violence and even "aggression." The word "defence" is used, but there are those who favour the idea of aggression as being necessary to forestall invasion of the self or nation. It can, of course, be used as rationalization. There was no justification for the invasion of Vietnam by the U.S., for example, as it was not in defence, yet F.D. Roosevelt's famous phrase, "Our first defence is on

the Rhine" may well have been justified in view of Hitlerism. In fact, the failure to use violence earlier against Franco in fascism's rehearsal in Spain, the "non-intervention" policy, may be called *anti-social non-violence*. It was a static position which was, in fact, active in tacitly supporting a violent general.

An interesting aspect of the article in *Weekend* is its reference to the stewardess who inadvertently connects violence with sex. What she does in approving the "male macho" of the non-violent male fighter who saves animals while she disapproves of the traditional hero, is a simple transfer or displacement of libido; like turning to a new lover, it is a frivolous bid for variation in erotic symbolism that will satisfy. Violence or counter-violence is "sexy." That the meek shall inherit the earth may come about, but on this basis the meek male will not inherit the female. Action – male action – is at the base of this sex interest, but in fact it really doesn't matter much what direction that action takes, despite protestations of altruistic motives. The medium of action thus becomes the "message" of excitation and sex. In that unstable state, interest could swing back to the traditional violence-action quite easily. Any excitation may produce thrills. As *Weekend* columnist John Kalbfleisch noted in the same magazine the week before in drawing a distinction between types of violence in violent films:

There is a sad pornographic movie going the rounds called *Snuff* which may or may not show the actual murder and dismemberment of a young girl. There is also *Jaws*, perhaps the most famous movie of all time. *Snuff* is a sleazy obscenity; *Jaws* is harmless, escapist fantasy . . . There is a reasonable chance that some nut perversely attracted to a showing of *Snuff* will later be moved to sordid back-alley violence of his own. But all the showings in the world of the other sort of thrills are not going to increase my chances of being ingested by a killer shark, shaken to bits by an earthquake, demonically possessed, or fried to a crisp in a nearby highrise. Indeed *Jaws* and company are probably good for us . . .

The writer's comments serve to show that one violence is not another, while he ignores psychological violence and asserts an incitement effect from one and a catharsis effect from another.

## Chapter Fourteen

### Some Intellectual Magazines

*Atlantic*, June 1976

*Saturday Review*, May 1976

*Harper's*, June 1976

*The Last Post*, February 1976

*Saturday Night*, March 1976

The five magazines in our "Intellectual" category above – three of them from the U.S. and the other two Canadian, reveal no violence. None of our eight criteria for violence can be applied. But that does not mean that these magazines avoid violence as a subject, which in fact would tend to put them into the Violence 6 category.

*The Last Post* of February 1976 deals with violence, as with other issues, in a serious, analytical way. Its article "The Hindoos" by Michael Morrow discusses anti-East-Indian tensions in British Columbia, starting with a grisly anecdote in which a Sikh was killed in a Victoria bar on Armistice Day, 1918, when he defended his right to leave his turban on his head. Does this anecdotal opening sensationalize a racial issue and tend to incite others to intolerance or even action? That is a moot question and possibly an "academic" one in consideration of the audience for any intellectual magazine, and in view of the thoughtful nature of the article as a whole, which is in no way sensational. There is no evidence of exploitation of violence themes in any of the other *Last Post* articles, including articles on Saskatchewan's takeover of potash mines, the Bryce Commission, the Alberta legislature, Cuba's "end of isolation" by Robert Chodos, "Quebec looks at World War II," and so on. The same non-violent verdict can be rendered on *Last Post* articles through the past few years, ranging from "The War of the Advertisements" (one up on the War of the Snacks in *Maclean's*) to the third force in Zimbabwe.

*Saturday Night*, like *The Last Post*, is a monthly Canadian magazine of comment on current affairs, book reviews, and some literary material. It is one of the few political magazines that publish fiction, a policy it introduced when the 88-year-old magazine was resurrected from a comatose position last winter. Its death or suspended animation that started in October 1974 and

ended in the Spring of 1975, served to illustrate the fragile dependency of magazines and other media on advertising, a theme discussed elsewhere in this paper.

Despite its age, the magazine has attempted to move with the times and retain a quality that no other Canadian magazine possesses. It is usually perceptive on Canadian and world affairs and often brilliant in statement. Bob Fulford, its editor of many years, has additionally given *Saturday Night* a verve and sophistication that other magazines lack. Next to his comments, *Maclean's* commentators often sound imitative of *Time*. *The Last Post*, on the other hand, also possesses that quality we have called "verve" in a subtly satirical way, but it remains more concerned, less dilettantish than *Saturday Night*. Whereas *The Last Post* is social science and mindful of system and society as crucial influences, *Saturday Night* is literary, not just in content but in a way of looking at things, sometimes cavalier and with a sense of classic liberalism centring on the individual. A condensation of one of its September 1975 articles by *Reader's Digest*, found elsewhere in this paper, shows how *Saturday Night* can use a story because it has "a good angle" – cavalier treatment – and coincide with the Digest's regressive formula.

The March 1976 issue of *Saturday Night* under review has a touch of violence on its cover as "refugees from the bureaucracy" of government flee from a vigilante mob along bat-infested paths. But the article itself is low-key, sympathetic, and unsensational. Some of the fiction in *Saturday Night* has violence, but it is a motivated violence with characterization and not merely the impact-violence of so much fiction today.

*Atlantic*, *Harper's*, and *Saturday Review* are in the same non-violent category. The last-named can be bland, euphemistic, and rather smug, but in fact all three are comfortable liberal magazines. They deal with violence in their fashion and in the middle American way with no shrillness, no sense of outrage or urgency. They cannot be faulted for sensationalism, even when the situation is sensational, crying out for some sense of outrage, of human emotion. There is no indication of what Stuart Hood, the British television executive, called "the right to disturb its audiences as part of a

programmed effort to arouse the conscience of a viewer." Programmed is a key word, for in many of these exposés, investigative articles, or "we view with alarm" pieces, there is a feeling of "How horrible! Next atrocity please." That may be found on the third page after the ads. (On television's *W-5* or *the fifth estate* it must be two or more cases per program or the audience may be lost.)

Then there is the trendiness of it all. The issues of *Atlantic* and of *Saturday Review* at hand happen to include reviews of Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment*, on the horrors of fairy tales, and there are, of course, the usual pro and con arguments. *Saturday Review* here is strictly pro-horror in fairy tales; the person it selects to review the book is Leslie A. Fiedler, author of *Love and Death in the American Novel*. He loves the violence of comic books and fairy tales on the assumption that the truth of myth and symbolism get through to the child or to the later child in the man. For Fiedler, the preferred version of Little Red Riding Hood, which he calls "ferociously feminist," and portraying the Wolf as the "bestially phallic" male principle, is where Ms. Hood and Grandma "are gobbled down forever. No escape, no recovery, no consolation. Merely horror, unremitting and unresolved, but withal somehow pleasurable."

Sometimes a magazine's "objectivity" is like the Irishman's remark, "I don't know what side I'm neutral on." Violence and other aspects can be promoted by choosing the right reviewer. The *Atlantic* of June 1976 also comes out "In praise of fairy tales" through the review of Richard Todd, who finds Bettelheim "deft and illuminating" despite excesses. Unlike Fiedler, he does not dwell on which horror is truest; in fact, he conspicuously avoids tangling with the issue of violent content. However, he sees that Bettelheim is an arch-conservative in his thinking on the nature of man, quoting him pointedly, "There is widespread refusal to let children know that the source of much that goes wrong in life is due to our very own natures – the propensity of all men for acting aggressively, asocially, selfishly, out of anger and anxiety." It seems not to have occurred to Bettelheim that such "natural" propensity for aggression may have been aggravated if not created by fairy tales that go beyond a child's frame of reference.

But now in the latter Seventies the trendy element is to be for violence and to look back in pity at the mid-Fifties when sadistic comic books were driven off the news-stands. To be so is to be chic, to be with it, to be anything but a decade old. Fiedler, for instance, wouldn't be caught dead with life. As he says in his review, "The middle fifties of this century saw the climax of an unprecedented campaign of total suppression, a cold war on Thanatos, which began by banning horror comic books . . ." It is Fredric Wertham to the wall for deplored, in his *Seduction of the Innocent*, the

"comic" (ha! ha!) book of sadistic horror. Some new version of Middle Fifties perceptions is called for.

## Chapter Fifteen

### *Chatelaine* – June 1976

Could there be violence in this middle-of-the-road magazine for women with the elegant name for mistress of a castle, *Chatelaine*, which has, for this issue, the Queen's picture on the cover as it has for so many issues? Yes, even there, but low-key, unconscious, and subliminal. We start with the editorial by Doris Anderson which tends to desensitize readers to violence in the way that most mainline commercial magazines do: by juxtaposing the serious message with the unserious or frivolous one and holding them all to a flat scale of values, homogenizing them.

In the editorial, "The Bad, the Good and the In-Between Days," Ms. Anderson writes, *inter alia*,

Hell on earth? Yes, it's that naked girl screaming and running down the road in Vietnam, her flesh burning with napalm. It's starving babies in Bangladesh, and skin-and-bones old people everywhere with vacant no-hope-left eyes . . . It's Minamata disease in babies born to mothers who have eaten mercury-poisoned fish . . . It's the times when you're so blue you can't even call a friend to help cheer you up . . . But there's heaven too . . . It's steaming hot coffee at dawn while the sky turns purple, then frosty pink . . .

Napalm-bombed children in the same magazine stewpot as blue moods and hot coffee. If you were saying this to someone rather than writing it, the sensitive reply would have to be, "How can you mention these *in the same breath*?" Yet the confusion of cataclysmic world disasters and agonizing sufferings with human discomforts in the consumer's society, as acute psychically as that can be, does violence to principles, priorities, intensity, and humanity. As long as you can feel good in the end, all is well.

In these magazine juxtapositions we have on Page 28 of this *Chatelaine*, "Machismo: Keep the Women Pregnant," which tells of the Mexican woman's plight in being treated as a baby-producing machine from puberty to menopause. Erna Paris's article is empathic, first-rate writing in its debunking of the *macho* man image (supermale, displaying virility) and the pathetic results: begging women, half-starving or dying of cold in the streets of Mexico City. The article is wedged between a Clairol hairspray ad titled "I want more," a new fabric softener ad called "Bounce," and "Alberta

Vodka". If the social conscience of readers is aroused at least momentarily, by an article it tends to float away in hairspray, soap, and alcohol.

Page 39 in that issue finds us confronting Marriage Reform with Part One of "Breaking The Tie That Binds." Here, the artist seems to hold that a little bit of sado-fetishism will do no harm, and we have the female marriage partner on a leash with a dog collar. Tiny traces of language violence appear also in language like "Truce in the Snack War" (p. 24) which tends only to show how martial sound appeal penetrates to the most trivial level. The subject is raisins for snacks, as nutrition or possible tooth decay, and the illustration on this monumental battle is no less than two hands pointing revolvers at each other. We have a touch of Violence 8.

## Chapter Sixteen

# For Working Women, Magazine Anodynes

Warren Breed, the American sociologist, has called attention to the fact that among the sacred cows of journalism is "the disinclination of the media to talk about social class as a cultural as well as a social aspect: class being social inequality, is the very antithesis of the American creed although the topic of class has been creeping into the media and into paperbacks like Vance Packard's *The Status Seekers*.<sup>1</sup>

But social class is manifest all through the media as a determinant often of the species and sub-species. For example, besides being older and less passionate, the readers of *Esquire* are more affluent than those of *Playboy*. Down the income line, one can find lower-income-group magazines made obvious by ads for spare-time earnings and, for the boarding-house recluse who can't afford a playmate, a see-through-walls telescope is offered.

Likewise publishers offer magazines for the income-educational levels of women. They include the Macfadden-Bartell group with the magic word "True" in the title (nothing false about these lies): *True Story*, *True Romance*, *True Confessions*, *True Experience*, *True Love*, and three others, *TV Radio Mirror*, *Photoplay*, and *Motion Pictures*. Writing in the September 1975 issue of *Canadian Forum*, Pamela McCallum calls attention to the working-class orientation of the magazine *True Confessions*, which she first read when she was 11:

... some images come back with a startling clarity the cheap paper, the black and white photographs, the coverheadlines about a girl who "went all the way" — these were the details of an almost forbidden world.<sup>2</sup>

She saw the magazine as a subtle form of domination, not a domination like Vorster's apartheid or Pinchet's repression, but one of the many forms spread throughout the whole non-totalitarian society with its messages implanted in the mass media. They are presented as natural, normal and unalterable. "Consequently, those dominated participate in their own domination." Women's magazines are "far more than mere diversions of entertainment. In their form and in their content they present to women certain ideas about themselves and their society."

This and other magazines succeed in getting the

reader to identify with their contents through the fake personal stories, which the women believe because they want so desperately to believe, and the "confirmation" of these by photographs, the newsprint paper, and the letters column (which may have been written by an editor). Identification and projection is obtained by use of the first person singular and the real problems of the working class woman: budgets, job and home, husband, boss, layoffs from work, pregnancy.

But, Ms. McCallum contends, while the environment is that of the lower-income working wife, the values and assumptions are solidly middle-class.

Most significant of all, True magazines promise a world without conflict. At first the True world may seem to be filled with threats, violence and unhappiness but the genuine tone of the magazine is more accurately represented by the smiling face that looks out beside the suggestive titles on the cover. However conflict-ridden the stories may be, the conflict is always resolved.<sup>3</sup>

The death of a husband or child ends with the heroine finding a new happiness in a new husband and a new pregnancy. Life is transformed by chance meetings and happenings; luck moves people from the depths to the heights. Saddest of all, "Nowhere is there any sense of social conditions as the origin of conflict and tension." People are shown to deserve what they get, even when husbands are laid off work. And that could be an American head office transferring a Canadian branch-plant contract to Japan. No matter, the poorly educated victims of an economically violent society have been given guilt feelings and blame themselves. No collective action against injustices in the industrial state is considered in this cult of individualism.

Obviously a good deal of harm is being done in the rather cruel deception practiced by various magazines of this type. The origin of the problem is largely out of the publishers' control, but nevertheless they exploit the situation. The magazine role is a stereotyping and conditioning one and the scale applying is Violence 10 (using apologetics), Violence 11 (the Immovable Object), and Violence 12 (Doing Violence to . . . truth-value through distortion).

## Chapter Seventeen

# Men's Magazines

*Playboy* - Straight Sex

*Esquire* - For The Tired Playboy

The development of "open communication" on fetishism in recent years is an editorial strategy that started with *Playboy* magazine, the first of the new girlie books and the model for many imitators.

*Playboy* was launched in 1955 by Hugh Hefner, a former writer for *Esquire* magazine. His contribution was to move pornography out of the wink, smirk, leer, and drool school at the back of the news-stand to a frank assertion of "hedonism" at the front of the stand or even alongside the cash register. It became as visible as the neutered *Reader's Digest* which is often found in that favoured spot. Those from the Acne Youth set to the Middle-Aged voyeur were emboldened to pick up a copy without embarrassment. (*Caning, Spanking, Bondage* and the fetish magazines could be as frank about their intentions as the undeviant playboys, but they could not move to the front of the room and in fact often have to be wrapped in a plastic sheath. The prices are high. Sado-masochism had to wait on the movies for full public exposure with films such as *The Story of O* where whips replaced hands and canes.) Hefner commercialized the female anatomy in a way that *Esquire* had never dreamed of by providing his ogling audience with a pictorial striptease of not so much the professional model, but "the girl next door." The show started with a buxom "student" or "nurse" fully clothed and moved bit by bit to a climactic centre-fold of the girl, front view or back or side view, revealed as a fulfilled fantasy in a provocative pose without a stitch.

Hefner's very first "girl next door" started right in his own office with photographs of his circulation manager, Janet Pilgrim, who had the physical attributes that he wanted to exploit. When, in those innocent days, the girl was shown in a frontal view, there was always airbrushing of pubic hair; armpit hair, of course, had long been banished. The idealization of the genital area of its centre-spread girls led one writer, Peter Michelson, to observe in the *Antioch Review* of Spring, 1967, that *Playboy* cleans up the image of sex by providing in The Playmate, "an antiseptic incarnation

of almost virginal contemporary community standards."<sup>1</sup>

Considering the "progress" in pornography since then, not only of *Playboy* and its host of imitators, including "Pentagon", which has out-obsценed *Playboy*, Michelson's words seem ancient. There was, he said, "no detail on the genitals, pubic hair, vagina or anus." The girl was "feminine, not female," and not made for coitus or motherhood. Echoing McLuhan's observation of more than a decade before in *The Mechanical Bride*, he noted that the Playmate was "body without consequence."

But Michelson was right on target in noting that the Playmate as an erotic art object would only titillate the reader-viewer's sexual sense in order to sublimate it into spending money on the goods advertised in the magazine. The dollar spent became an analogue of male sperm. Here, the psychic process of displacement takes place whereby sex energy is transformed or sublimated into buying. Rather than lose our lust on the world we acquire a new car, Michelson said, which is another kind of potency or form of catharsis.

In "Eye Appeal" in *The Mechanical Bride*, McLuhan wrote:

Professor Kinsey has charted the erotic life of the male animal in a series of curves, the co-ordinate axes of which are of the utmost value to distributors of consumer goods.<sup>2</sup>

But, more importantly, McLuhan had shown the connection between sexual imagery and violence.

Ads like these not only express but also encourage that strange dissociation of sex not only from the human person but from the unity of the body. . . the Hiroshima bomb was named "Gilda" in honour of Rita Hayworth. . . There are some signs that sex weariness may be a factor in the cult of violence. . . although Wilhelm Reich, the psychologist, argues that it is a mere substitute for sex in those who have acquired the rigidities of a mechanized environment. . . there is surely much to be said also for the view that sadistic violence, real or fictional, in some situations, is an attempt to invade persons not only sexually, but metaphorically. . . it is an effort to pass the frontiers of sex, to achieve a more intense thrill than sex affords. There was certainly a good deal of destruction intermixed with the pleasure ideals of the Marquis de Sade. . .

sensation and sadism are near twins.<sup>3</sup>

*Playboy* is in evidence here as an exhibit for Violence 3 – dehumanizing.

The connection between sex and violence, however, may be approached from three different directions. They might be summarized as the violence-sex, sex-violence, and porno-violence approaches. In the first named, violence is an intensification of the sexual drive; in the second approach it is sex that substitutes for or proves more satisfactory than violence. This is the injunction “Make love, not war”, and the alternative is, of course “Make war, if you can’t make love.” The third, “pornoviolence”, is a disguise of sexual desire in violence, real or symbolic. All are seen as essentially similar shoots from the same root.

The make-believe world of the magazine may reflect these differences. Among “men’s magazines” we can identify two types, which Bob Fulford once categorized as “The Smooths” and “The Roughs.” What both have in common, he said, was the debasing of women. The readers of the Smooths fantasize about sex in a penthouse with the bunny girl who has the serviceable parts, and may resort to a guilt-reducing rationalization that they are interested in good music or books. But she is an expendable item as all bunny girls are when they become 25 or so, even though the fantasizing male may be 45. The Roughs are the he-men as contrasted with these she-men. They avoid women and wouldn’t be caught dead in a penthouse, though they wouldn’t mind being vicariously caught dead in a jungle with their gun cocked at the ready, they find gratification in outdoor “adventure,” in the bric-à-brac of guns and symbols of the hunt, in cars, boats, pipes, hobbies, and the “man’s world” away from females. When women cross their path, as they do occasionally in the pages of *Argosy*, *True*, and *Official Detective*, the Roughs, treat them roughly, naturally, and so what the reader receives for his money in this magazine is like that for any magazine readership – a reinforcement of lifestyle or of wishful thinking, a sublimation for impotence or frustration, an escape from domesticity and self-hero fantasy of Walter Mitty proportions.

Both the “Roughs” and the “Smooths” really dislike women as persons; neither can abide them in conversation for very long or in any give-and-take of equality. Thus both do violence to the female in their fashion. As Oscar Wilde said in a different context: “And all men kill the thing they love,/By all let this be heard,/Some do it with a bitter look,/Some with a flattering word./The coward does it with a kiss,/The brave man with a sword!

Man loves violence, not because he is a “killer” at heart or by ape ancestry but because he is a lover. He may regard himself falsely as the lover of other or others. In the ancient Greek myth of Narcissus the loved one is a reflection of man himself in the pool, and this is the person he really loves unknowingly. But such love is unavailable, in mythic terms it shows the contradiction of self-love, as self-love is impossible, not being

“love” at all, but something else. It is excommunication from mankind as others are rejected and leads to death of spirit or body. And so Narcissus pines away for lack of love from *himself*, ironically, as others pined for lack of love from him. He learns how others have suffered from his rejection, namely Echo in the myth, because of his all-consuming love of self. He could not reach his “other self,” the reflection in the water, because in fact it was only an extension of self like a fantasy and not an “other” in any way.

*Esquire* magazine is an interesting transitional case, slipping half way over as it has from the Smooths to the Roughs and being now a magazine for the tired playboy. The *Esquire* man is older, more serious, more affluent, less inclined to fantasize and now puttering around his garden. The cover of its June 1976 issue is symptomatic of the process: a near-nude female from the back with one buttock advertising the Texas Tattoo Convention, while in the picture are summer playthings that are not playmates: volleyball, a sailboat, a pair of cut-off jeans, and a spilled cocktail glass. This is sophistication, of course and a long way from the *Esquire* passions of the thirties and forties.

In the early years Arnold Gingrich, the editor, managed to make *Esquire* into a magazine of literary distinction; with authors such as Ernest Hemingway there was fiction violence of the deadly Great White Hunter type, but it was mainly violence with a meaning in terms of basic human emotions. There was also a kind of bravado in the magazine, an early machismo.

The female body is still on display in *Esquire*, but outside some rather gauche humour there is a curious lack of the ogling debasement of women (Violence 3) as found in girlie magazines. Perhaps it is reader age, but the *Esquire* girl seems to have become a pal to the *Esquire* man that is far from the sex-only playmate image.

## Chapter Eighteen

# Argosy: Where Sex is Low-Key, Violence is Here

As between the exploitation of sex and the exploitation of violence, the former is to be preferred when sex is what might be called "straight sex" and not porno-violence and not sick fetish sex. The display of human physical forms without clothes however can be necessary and beautiful and so can human intimacies. This is more nakedness than nudity, for the former is closer to reality, every image, including photographic ones, embodies a way of seeing and the-world-as-it-is is more than pure objective fact. It includes consciousness. The nude, however, is an art-form of classic or popular art and as such is subject to glamorization or sometimes to uglification. John Berger in his *Ways of Seeing* comments that women become objects in nude paintings and thus are seen and judged as "sights". He notes that in the Adam and Eve myth nakedness was created in the eye of the beholder.

The second striking fact is that the woman is blamed and is punished by being made subservient to the man. In relation to the woman, the man becomes the agent of God. . . In the medieval tradition, the story was often illustrated, scene following scene, as in a strip cartoon. During the renaissance the narrative sequence disappeared, and the single moment depicted became the moment of shame. The couple wear fig-leaves or make a modest gesture with their hands. But now their shame is not so much in relation to one another as to the spectator. . . It is worth noticing that in other non-European traditions, – in Indian arts, African arts, Pre-Columbian art – nakedness is never supine and if, in these traditions, the theme of the work is sexual attraction, it is likely to show active sexual love as between two people, the woman as active as the man, the actions of each absorbing the other. . . To be naked is to be oneself. To be nude is to be seen naked by others and not recognized for oneself. A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude. The sight of it as an object stimulates the use of it as an object. Nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is on display. . . a form of dress.<sup>1</sup>

This is interesting in view of the biblical and puritanic traditions that condemn nudity or nakedness before violence and fail to see the connection in some cases. A depiction of straight sexual intercourse in the magazines is generally still taboo, though deviations are portrayed, but the popular magazines depict one kind of violence after another. A child may watch killings (though often antiseptic), woundings, sadistic behaviour and

callousness of every type on television, and he will see forms of nudity, but he will not ordinarily view sexual intercourse, with exceptions like the recently cancelled "Blue Movies" on CITY-TV. Man has a sense of guilt often condoned and "manly" or considered a justifiable act.

The he-man image magazines are notable for unwittingly following the violence tradition, very much like McLuhan's "I'm Tough" in *The Mechanical Bride*:

This old fashioned gent (in old ad for Bond suits), trying to look as Neanderthal as possible, is still common and influential . . . "Panty-waist stuff burns me. Work ten hours a day. Been at it since I was a kid. Gang at the plant call me Chief. Own the place now."

. . . As we suggest *The Mechanical Bride*, sex is not enough in a technological world, and here is James Aldridge, writing in *The New York Times*, plainly giving the reasons why today brutality, is not enough, and he advocates scientific killing in place of a mere brutality.<sup>2</sup>

But as he adds in "The Tough as Narcissus":

Fear is the primary motive in toughness. Fear easily gives rise to hate, which intensifies brutality. . . It is the weak and confused who worship the pseudo-simplicities of brutal directness. . . those who are confused or overwhelmed by a machine world are encouraged to become psychologically hard, brittle and smoothly metallic. . . If you are a weak little man, get inside a big strong man. .<sup>3</sup>

This is the psychological set for those who are addicted to magazines such as *Argosy*, *True Detective*, and *Official Detective*. In its May 1976 issue, *Argosy* shows it is not for panty-waists. Writer Peter McCabe deplores the sex industry, which of course *Argosy* is not all about, and sometimes with much understanding:

Ten years ago the sex industry did not exist. When people talked of commercial sex they meant *Playboy*. Sex merchandising in the fifties and sixties catered only to the most elementary aspects of adolescent fantasy. The *Playboy* models were carefully airbrushed and so-called dirty books never dealt in specific descriptions of sexual intercourse . . . ten years later we're a nation of sexual carnivores . . . reached by what has been one of the most successful, if disjointed, marketing efforts ever foisted upon mid-century man. . . Sex magazines now account for more than 30 per cent of all magazines sold on newsstands . . . for every *Esquire* reader there are now two

readers of *Hustler*, five of *Penthouse* and six of *Playboy* . . . I am sitting in the office of *Screw* magazine beneath a two-by-four calendar of Jackie Onassis, totally in the nude, reading the publication and waiting for its editor, Al Goldstein. *Screw*, now sells 140,000 copies . . . women's sex magazines have had the same effect on insecure men that the girlie magazines have had on women. These women know little about the photo techniques used to require the "maximum tumescence in repose" shot of *Viva* and *Playgirl*.<sup>4</sup>

He proceeds to say that such exaggerations of genitalia, of virility and variety, have induced feelings of frustrations and failure in men and women alike.

While sex is out for *Argosy*, violence has long been a staple.

Its lead article, "Is Ronald Reagan for Real?" is as much for Reagan as it is for Ford as Presidential Republican candidate, but the comparison is practically all on personality with brief, unanalyzed bits on policies, which of course don't vary all that much. Like many of the immature "he-man" magazines, it is Archie Bunkerism and filled with right-wing clichés in its simplicity. The cues go like this, quoting a farmer:

Listen here, I'll tell you why I like Regan . . . I gets to keep my gun. I won't be paying all them taxes to help pay the way of the welfare chiselers and my wife ain't gonna have the same bathroom as my buddies . . .<sup>5</sup>

And he writes how ". . . an undetermined force is pushing us inexorably toward socialism. A lot of citizens seem remarkably well informed about what has happened in Britain and in other European countries." He went on to say Reagan's audience in Los Angeles "agreed that we should not give up the Panama Canal Zone." It applauded the idea of a balanced budget. It roared when Reagan told them of the "idiocy of Karl Marx."<sup>6</sup>

In the article "Weatherwar" we hear how the U.S. military waged war on Vietnam by inducing torrential rains, a new and awesome weapon facing future warriors.

"Toupee Or Not To Pay" is a rather poor pun on how men should forget the youth syndrome and prefer the bald head they have, and how many women prefer these Yul Brynner and Telly Savalas types. It is non-violent reinforcement of balding readers, getting on in years.

"The Great White Shark" takes us back to the outdoorsman in search of savage sharks and, as the author Paul d'Angelo finds, there is something more than just machismo in this:

There are sights certain to raise the hair on the back of any man's neck. A charging rhinoceros will certainly do it, as will a face to face confrontation with an enraged grizzly bear, but you would have to have been in my shoes to feel the same sickening feeling that I felt that night . . . It was a gratifying soul-satisfying trip. The amazing thing about this kind of sport is that it's within the reach of every angler.<sup>7</sup>

This kind of vicarious experience reminds the reader that he is a man in his definition of man. The big-fish trip is largely true, perhaps a little embellished. That is

brought out in the ads too, wherein you have the army recruiting ad, the hard-faced male in a Winston cigarette ad ("Winston is for real"), or Johnson Outboards for this target audience, ads for fixing your own car, steam-cleaning a garage or a sawmill, motor oils, cars, and the kind of fantasies that this ad raises: "I can make you appear to be a millionaire in just four weeks," where "Fact Research" says: "I've done it and I've enjoyed new cars, luxurious homes, fat bank accounts, the best foods, wine, women and best of all, lots and lots of money! I will now sell you my secrets . . ." Like women's romance magazines, *Secret Story* and *True Secrets*, these men's magazines also revel in magic formulas, luck, hidden, semi-occult, mysterious ways in which they might transform themselves without effort into an instantly different person who will not have to rely on the fantasies in the magazines ("Get Your Creditors Off Your Back; Enjoy All Kinds Of Vacations Absolutely Free and really, as the best escape of all, Vanish . . . yes, completely disappear and change your identity.")

We have too, on money-back guarantee, a book called *Very Special People* on human oddities such as Jo-Jo the Dog-Faced Boy, Randid the Caterpillar Man, Armless and Legless Wonders, the Mule-Faced Woman; ads that say "learn meatcutting, become an ordained minister," and "University degrees - without studying." Finally, we might mention matrimonial ads, "erotic condoms," and a very short article on female singers. And so we find a slight admission that women exist, a tiny move from the Roughs toward the Smooths.

The violence here is in segregation and militancy, perhaps in the cultivation of ignorance and escapist solutions – a kind of middle-of-the-road he-man wanting to hit the road for good. There is no serious violence in evidence.

## Chapter Nineteen

# The Ultra-Violent “Detectives”

*Official Detective*, June 1976  
*True Detective*, February 1977

Among the most violent of magazines surveyed was *Official Detective*. It placed in Violence 1 (Warmongering), Violence 2 (Torture), Violence 3 (Crime), Violence 4 (Vengeance-Seeking), Violence 5 (Aggression); Violence 6 (Authoritarianism), Violence 7 (Dehumanizing), Violence 8 (Sensationalizing), Violence 9 (Reveling), Violence 11 (Static Violence), and Violence 12 (Doing Violence to). All are there except Violence 10 (Euphemism, underplaying). These are all necrophiliac violences depicting the physical. Yet the subtler and more widespread violence done by *Reader's Digest* would qualify as greater, as it reaches far more readers in a world-wide circulation and serves oppressive and powerful multinational interests who can bring down governments and help install military dictatorships.

Like a whole squad of detective, police, and crime magazines, it carries attention-grabbing titles on the cover: “Case of Georgia's ‘Milking Time’ Rape-Slayer,” “Perverse Sex Pleasures of the Sadistic Doctor,” and “Eleven throats were cut by the Skid Row Slasher!”

The cover picture is of the sadist-nudist type, one with a blonde young woman tied to a brick wall but so unconvincingly that it is obviously posed. Not so obvious, however, are the articles inside the magazine which purport to have been taken from police files and are a cut above the “Tabs” such as *Midnight*, which Robert Lantos has referred to as “fabrication factories.”

The lead story in *Official Detective* is so gruesome, with such loathesome details concerning a husband's strangulation, battering, knifing, defilement, and sexual abuse of his wife, that, true or false, the question for the reader is why? Not why was it done but why was such a piece of trash printed?

Who could wallow in this sordid obscenity without being as sick-minded as the killer depicted? Yet we know that readers by the millions can hardly wait for the next issue of this and similar magazines. Here the violence obviously arises from sex, “Was The Sex-Killer Sterile?” “The Con Man Specialized in Sex Captives,” and “Catharine was Naked, Bloody and Dead.” The

details are all there to drink in, as in this passage: “Sometimes, it was believed, he would slip into the shoes of his victims, seeking some grim satisfaction from the recent warmth of a dead man's feet. He is believed to have drunk the blood of at least two of his victims.” This was one of the less-violent paragraphs, but it provides another clue to the reader interest: cannibalism.

The heroes are both criminals and lawmen in these pages, as the fetish-god, the super-hero, is really an abstraction, Violence. So we have an article on “Machine-Gun Kelly.” He thus is described “He was a trigger-happy gunman, kidnapper, bank heister and jack of all criminal trades. And although he never intended to do a favor for his mortal enemies, his deadly cat and mouse game with Feds helped to make FBI agents the most feared lawmen in all the world.” It is difficult to say who the reader identifies with, Cohen or the FBI.

One of the cues in *Official Detective* seems to be the use of instruments in sex-slaying cases, suggesting that the appeal is to impotent men. In one case the sterile sex-killer used “a most unusual murder weapon - part of a bird bath.” In the sadistic-doctor case it was a cucumber, and in the article, “Catharine Was Naked, Bloody and Dead!” there were two toothpicks for “insertion of a foreign object.” There seems too to be a face-battering fetish in several stories as if to indicate that readers love to read about fighting by the victims. Here would be the vicious little sub-subspecies that we spoke of.

*True Detective* is in the same category and covers exactly the same number of “violences” as *Official Detective*. Its content pages offer several mouth-watering “specials,” such as its “TD Double Length Exclusive,” an article called “The Sex Cannibal who Raped and Ate Girls” and “The Best of TD-Gold Anniversary Bonanza,” called “I Always Wanted to Torture a Girl.” Headlines catch the reader's eye and are a primary mover of the prurient merchandise. Tabloids, pornographic, fetish, and conventional magazines use them for that purpose, and even

newspapers pitch them so that they can prove attractive, though not as much as in the sensationalist Hearst days.

The most sensationalist headline in recent years was one published in a newspaper in England concerning the pilot, Eskimo boy, and nurse who were faced with starvation when their bushplane was forced down in the North, leading to the death of the nurse and real cannibalism. The headline read: "Pilot eats nurse."

Obviously it was unnecessarily crude, written in the usual style of head-hunting around the news desks of tabloids and their near-relatives in the anthropology of journalism.

A line in *True Detective* refers to "the additional horror that some of the meatier parts of the thighs and buttocks were missing . . ." (Before one of *our* critics can say that repeating such lines is tantamount to doing the same as the original, we have to point out that "context" and "meaning" are here on the subject of sadistic porn, and some evidence, as in court, must be presented. We quote only a tiny part of the blood-reveling in the magazine.)

Unlike the fetish magazines quoted elsewhere, the porno-violent "Detectives" are self-righteous and hypocritical; if not hypocritical they are self-hypnotic. An editorial in *True Detective* tells of a senior citizen couple who committed suicide in their New York apartment because of a crime wave against the elderly. Crime incidents like this are factual and a serious problem. The magazine editor, A.P. Govoni, writes "Not until the voice of outraged America reaches such a crescendo that our lawmakers—to save their own jobs—take drastic steps to revamp our criminal justice from top to bottom and put the fear of swift and certain punishment into that army of robbers, rapists, and killers who have laughed at the law for far too long [will the crime wave end]."

The editor ignores the fact that the magazine he is writing for is loaded with examples of violence in the grisliest cases ever recorded or fabricated for the titillation of readers, and possibly the incitement to crime and to sick action like "I Always Wanted to Torture . . ."—not factual, not analytical, but horribly sensationalized in such a way that no one will be led to consider rationally the real problem of crime. But the anti-crime crusade itself sells magazines. Assuming that the letters are authentic we have comments such as these:

I have been a TD reader for years and have always enjoyed the magazine, but I find your editorials very upsetting. I think it's bad enough that we have to live with these terrible conditions in this country without having editorials constantly reminding everybody how bad things are . . . there's nothing we can do about it.

Or this one:

Just want you to know how much I enjoy and appreciate your editorials. It sure as hell is too bad we have not got a hell of a lot of men like you running our government. These bleeding hearts and S.O.B. church saints make me sick . . . for my

money [dope pushers and forcible rapists] should be killed as soon as they're caught . . . thanks for a fine magazine.<sup>2</sup>

And so the vacuum vortex left in the wake of the violence salesmen unfold: "About the lady who wrote that 'prisoners are human'; people like her make me sick," . . . "I wish you would put more explicit pictures of your victims in your magazine."

Or this cry for more morbidity, "Yours must be the last magazine published these days that covers up parts of the human bodies in pictures with the stories. There is nothing indecent about the human body."

Either the editor is opening the way for an undercover campaign or he really has these readers:

I've always admired the candor used by your writers in your reports on various crimes, but I can't help wondering why you are so prudish as to cover up parts of the bodies of nude or almost nude women in the photos shown with the stories.

Most of the readers here are shown to be more blood-thirsty than the editor and wanting more and more. Some figuratively want to unearth old crime, like P. Lopez of Phoenix, Arizona, who wrote to find out some old lonely-hearts killers. The appetite is apparently voracious and bottomless like continual eating or drinking, a sickness of ingesting that by reversal, makes them sick of others and use a phrase that is often identified with the necrophilous or the authoritarian personality "bleeding hearts."<sup>3</sup>

Ads are, of course, the best indication of audience, and in fact can be better than demographic information insofar as many show the audience's particular dreams, fears, fetishes, fantasies, needs, e.g. "This Book Could Put Us In Jail, As It Puts You On Easy Street." This is a "law-abiding" magazine.

*Official Detective* and *True Detective* are produced by the same New York company, RGH Publishing Corporation.

## Chapter Twenty

### Porno-Violence

In *Mass Media and Mass Man*, Tom Wolfe asked that we “Pause Now And Consider Some Tentative Conclusions About The Meaning Of This Mass Perversion Called Pornoviolence. What It Is And Where It Comes From And Who Put The Hair On The Walls.” Writing of a convention of “stringers” (correspondents) for *The National Enquirer*, a weekly tabloid, he said:

I speak of the new pornography, the pornography of violence. Pornography comes from the Greek *porne*, meaning harlot, and pornography is literally the depiction of the acts of harlots. In the new pornography the theme is not sex. The new pornography depicts practitioners acting out another murkier drive: people staving teeth in, ripping guts open, blowing brains out and getting even with all those bastards...<sup>1</sup>

He cites a few titles that had been used in *The Enquirer*: “Keeps His Mom-in-law in Chains,” “Kills Son and Feeds Corpse to Pigs,” “To Get Gold Teeth, Strangles Girl Friend, Then Chops Her to Pieces.” The avant-garde writers in pornography were doing no more than the respectable authors and publishers, a former publisher of the tabloid *Confidential* told Wolfe. People who buy the slick paperbacks are revelling in violence too, he said. *Death of a President* was bought because people wanted to see a man get his head blown off.

Invariably these “special coverages” of the assassination bore introductions piously commemorating the fallen President, exhorting the American people to strength and unity in a time of crisis, urging greater vigilance and safeguards for the new President and even raising the nice, metaphysical question of collective guilt in “an age of violence.” In the three and a half years since then, of course, there has been an incessant replay, with every recoverable details of those less than five seconds in which a man got his head blown off.<sup>2</sup>

This is a totally cynical view and, of course, Wolfe himself sensationalizes with the phrase “got his head blown off.” In all this deluge of words, pictures, and film clips he contends that

the point of view, the vantage point, is almost never that of the victim, riding in the Presidential Lincoln Continental. What you get is the view from Oswald's rifle. You can step right up there and look point-blank right through the very hairline cross in Lee Harvey Oswald's Optics Ordinance four-power Japanese telescopic sight...<sup>3</sup>

It is not the accumulated slayings and bone crushings that make this porno-violence, however. What makes it porno-violence is that in almost every case the camera angle, therefore the viewer, is with the gun, the fist, the rock... no point of view in the old sense that novels do... you do not live the action through the hero's eyes. You live with the aggressor. One moment you are the hero. The next, you are the villain.<sup>3</sup>

And he concludes: “The new pornography is the fantasy of easy triumph in a world where status competition has become complicated and frustrating.” Violence is the simple, ultimate solution.

Wolfe notes that Truman Capote's book *In Cold Blood* had the invisible sub-title, “Put hair on the walls,” and the book is based on a totally new idea in detective stories: the promise of gory details which are not provided until page 244. The heroes or villains are lower-class here, but in the James Bond stories the new pornography appeals to the middle-class bureaucrat. Bond is an “operative” with superiors who dress him down for violating procedure in his mayhem.

Obviously, pornography or porno-violence is enjoyed not only by “low people” or a particularly heinous type of individual, but the serried ranks of solid citizens.

A New York newsman with the pen-name of Reginald Potterton, who was out of work in the spring of 1963 owing to the newspaper strike, tells how he took a job on *The National Enquirer* for ten months as Articles Editor. Writing in *Playboy* later about the experience, he stated that the 40 or so tabloid publishers have a combined weekly circulation of 7,000,000 in the U.S. and Canada and these, in his view, “represent a significant condition in our culture.” His citation of the headlines outdoes Tom Wolfe's, including as they do the title to his article, “I cut out her heart and stomped on it,” and two others that might be described as the pinnacle or depth of sick humour: “Man, 23, beats woman, 102, to death in self-defense” and “Widow prays for five years at wrong grave.”<sup>4</sup>

Writers were well-paid specialists, one man earning \$100,000 annually. The so-called news stories are, of course, largely fabrications. As fiction, they involve more imagination than Capote's *In Cold Blood*. Wolfe observed that *The National Enquirer* was turning away from mere sex.

When Generoso Pope, Jr., bought the tab in 1952 it had a circulation of 25,000 a week. In a few years it was selling more than a million copies a week.

Potterton's report is not that of a psychologist, but he had what many of them do not have – on-the-job experience in magazines – and to this he added some analysis, e.g. "Nobody who has read the case histories in Kraft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* or in Stickel's *Sexual Aberrations* will be too puzzled by the classified ads in *Justice Weekly*. Clearly, as editor-publisher Phil Daniels confirmed, the publication represents a kind of community bulletin board for foot and boot fetishists, sado-masochists, parapathic voyeurs and transvestites. The cryptic wording of some of the persons would be immediately explicit to those partial to mixoscopia – a term psychiatrists use for sexual excitement derived from witnessing others perform sexual acts; while other ads might appeal for those with a preference from everything from Pygmalionism to coprophilia." The tabs do get letters from their readers as an indication of effect. One to the *Enquirer* was about a man dying in a New Jersey flat. An article had reported that, after dying, his pet dogs ate him. The reader asked, "I would like to know if the house that he was found in is for rent and if you could find out if it is for rent to let me know."

The sadness in this story, if true, lies not only in the reader's depraved taste, but in his ignorance in thinking the story was true, or that the editors would help him.

Do the publishers of the tabs have any guilt feelings about pandering to prurient tastes or incitement to violence? Potterton interviewed Phil Daniels in Toronto by phone from New York and quoted the 76-year-old publisher as saying in justification of *Justice Weekly*,

I am 100 per cent normal. There's a need for a paper like mine. . . . It allows, those people who can't be cured – and they can't you know, they can't – to get in touch with each other through our ads. By doing so, they leave decent, innocent people alone. Everything in this paper, including the letters, is guaranteed bona fide. There's nothing phony about this operation.

This was substantially the same thing that this dapper, rather impressive little man told the author's media class at the University of Western Ontario some years ago.

But in fact everything is rather phony about a "tab" newspaper or magazine like *Justice Weekly*. It is self-religious and hypocritical, employing a form of "cognitive consonance" of which readers are unaware. The fetishism is disguised as "discipline" and in stories of sadism or murder, the offender is called "vile" or "beastly" or a "depraved monster". The reader laps up the gory details of violent lechery and then salves his own conscience for this savoury revelling by using moral denunciations. He really wants to be that despicable Nazi who mercilessly beats the half-clad females into fellatio slaves; yet this is not acceptable conduct, so he uses the epithets and rids himself of guilt thereby. It is having your moral cake and eating it too.

Pierre Berton in writing of *Justice Weekly* said:

To be blunt, *Justice* caters to sadists and to their opposite numbers, the masochists. These words, of course, are never used. In the four-page Lonely Hearts department, which is a meeting place for people with mutually bizarre tastes . . . the phrases are always "corporal punishment," "discipline," and "correction." . . . most of these letters are couched in highly moral tones . . .<sup>5</sup>

But sadist or maso-sadist magazines have moved a long way from such prose. Their frank admission of fetishism and its childhood origin along with the rationale that it is cathartic, is nowhere near the self-righteous pose of the tabloids, as the example from *Caning* will show:

Caning is a pastime enjoyed by many as a fetish for achieving sexual rapport. Stimulating one's lover by punishing her buttocks can produce a sexual appetite of ecstatic proportions . . . a regimen of caning provides a simple outlet for aggression. The roles of the punisher and the punished are sublime. Even more than in spanking, the urge of submission prevails. This is due to the fact that caning is originally associated with the corporal punishment of juvenile offenders in school and at home. The beating is administered by way of correction (presumably) for purposes of bad behavior . . . There is no tactile intimacy as with spanking – there is no lap to lie across and no familiar hand caresses the target.

Instead, the repentant Miss must pose herself, and with only self-restraint, bear the stinging of the impersonal rod. In an adult-child situation it is this essence of unwilling cooperation that typifies the caning and makes one long for a similar experience – but with sexual rewards . . .<sup>6</sup>

This fetish magazine is sado-masochist at a high price, (\$7.95), and not found on ordinary news-stands; it is virtually unavailable to minors. Compared with the "Detectives," and tabs it seems almost innocent – pictures of adults playing childhood regression games with each other. On our scale it is Violence 7 (Dehumanizing).

## Chapter Twenty-One

### *Mad*

*Mad*, of course, was the magazine to end all magazines and perhaps expresses people's dilemma better than any analysis. With a steady rain of putrefaction in their faces, why would people have so much trouble identifying it and doing something about it, perhaps changing necrophilia to biophilia? No amount of logic or study seems to be able to cope. Fredric Wertham, the noted psychiatrist who was successful in having crime comics socially and legally disapproved, revealed the sense of frustration when he wrote:

They [comic books] contain such details as one girl squirting fiery "radium dust" on the protruding breasts of another girl (I think I've discovered your Achilles heel, chum!), white men banging natives around; a close-up view of the branded breast of a girl; a girl about to be blinded . . . I feel like a fool to have to prove that this kind of thing is not good mental nourishment for children.<sup>1</sup>

It is this sense of the Absurd that *Mad* expresses as we all find ourselves back in the medieval scholastic argument on how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. Perhaps Wertham's warning about the poor *acedia* is taking place – the gradual impoverishment of mental energy, a condition found in the monasteries. That was sensory deprivation in modern terms, but while today it seems "the world is too much with us" the fact is that so much of the "world" is surrogate. Communication does not exist in the advanced urbanized industrial state to a degree where there is great personal interaction. People are free, but mostly free to listen – in McLuhan's words, "to put up or shut up."

The modern Little Red Riding Hood, reared on singing commercials, has no objection to being eaten by the wolf. "Freedom to Listen" in a world where effective expression via newspaper or radio is reserved only for a tiny minority, is freedom to put up or shut up . . . a huge passivity has settled on industrial society.<sup>2</sup>

*Acedia* has set in. It is sloth, apathy, ennui, even melancholia due to our lack of control over the images that influence us and drive us into a narcotic dysfunction, or of course into its frightening opposite, violence. McLuhan expressed the paradox of violence more recently in the September 1976 issue of *Canadian Forum*:

The loss of individual and personal meaning via the electronic media ensures a corresponding and reciprocal violence from those so deprived of their identities; for violence, whether spiritual or physical, is a quest for identity and the meaningful. The less identity the more violence . . . the violence exerted by groups knows no bounds.<sup>3</sup>

But this applies to the loss of personal meaning via any medium. The younger teenagers of the Sixties seemed to grasp this with what they regarded as their magazine, *Mad*, wherein the world was reduced to a farce. The satire extended to the absurdities of the advertising age, the fast-book and fast-buck world, the creeping conservatism of their elders, and the consumer society in a thousand directions. Sex and violence were simply made to look ridiculous, facets of a silly machine state.

In the July 1976 issue we have violence and *Reader's Digest* brought: into a familiar juxtaposition: "A Disaster Saved My Life," with the story of the man in the "writing game" who was writing the great movie, continued on page 72 (there are 48 pages in the magazine). The cover of "A Disaster Magazine" is depicted, "The Digest for Diggers of Doom", and how "Two brothers lost in avalanche 20 years ago re-united briefly during a mid-air collision," like an unforgettable tab.

As *Mad* tells its readers, we are moving in commercial cycles of violence in our media:

It used to be Wars . . . then Violence . . . then Sex . . . and now it's Disaster that makes the masses stand in lines and plunk down their hard-earned bread at movie houses. Today there is an avid market for burning skyscrapers, sinking ocean liners, earthquakes, etc. And so *Mad* predicts that it won't be long before some enterprising publisher comes out with: DISASTER MAGAZINE.<sup>4</sup>

Parents were unable to see that *Mad* was a Sunday School type of magazine, except for some of its art, as it emphasized the values of conservation and truth, trust, and life generally against greed, lies, graven images, militarism, status, et cetera. What R.D. Laing has called "the sick society" faces the young readers and they try to laugh it away.

In contrast to *Mad*, *National Lampoon* is sick with its "eech" of vomit and gut-spilling, hanging, sex grotesqueries, and gauche "funny" racism as seen in the May 1976 issue.

## Recommendations

1. Creation of a public "Media Watchers" group. These would be mainly or exclusively consumers of the media with some having knowledge in law, civil liberties, media research, and media practice. There would be no government members and possibly no "professional" media producers as in the Ontario Press Council. The latter consists of papers owned by the Southam Press Ltd., or in which it has an interest, *The Toronto Star*, the *London Free Press*, and two weekly papers, which represent about half the daily newspaper circulation in Ontario. The chairman is A. Davidson Dunton. There are ten members from the newspaper field and ten from the public, but public members have been appointed by the newspaper members.

A Media Council, however composed, would serve somewhat like members of the Canadian Consumers' Association who scrutinize physical goods; this council would scrutinize mental goods in relation to violence, evaluate them and recommend various actions – ranging from devices like the recent installation of "cover boards" on news-stands to urging the banning of violent material, e.g. the so-called "Detective" magazines from New York with their grisly depravities.

Study of methods used in other countries, of public tastes, of the industry would be an ongoing one for "mental goods" production. No other area of enquiry but violence of an extreme type is considered here. "Pornography" is not included if it is not "porno-violence" or sadism.

2. Publication of a Newsletter on some of the findings and analysis of problems but not in such a way as to publicize the material for its own sake. The author of this paper along with some media practitioners and academics have been publishing for the past three years a small quarterly magazine called *Media Probe* for critical examination of communication and mass media. This is more a magazine than a newsletter.

3. Elimination of obvious, calculated falsehoods. Where there is a *prima facie* case of falsehood, as in the "fabrication factories" referred to in this paper, an action should be taken. It may be an individual who ordinarily could sue, but can't afford to, or an individual or organization which has been maligned, not in terms of opinion or even sensationalism, which is hard to judge, but in terms of an outright lie that "does violence to." We are not referring to "the permissible lie" of advertising, but to blatant, anti-social lies in any material that can be shown to do harm. Racism is one example.

4. Special Store-Clinics. Where it is impossible to ban some of the more vicious material as in the ban on crime comics in the mid-Fifties, there is some violence material in magazines that should be confined to special stores. Some of it could only be described as sick. The

reader should be going to a doctor, not a news-stand, and if indeed he "needs" this material in some way, e.g. in the mistaken idea that this is catharsis, then he needs clinical help. It is suggested that special stores sell the material just as liquor stores sell their form of drug, but that with each copy of the magazine, information be handed out on the abnormality of fetishism and porno-violence or straight violence to adults.

5. As countervailing programs have been suggested above for public education, it is recommended that "opinion leaders" in Canada be sent analytic material concerning media violence in their particular spheres. Teachers are highly important, at elementary and secondary levels. When *Reader's Digest* and *Time* or other magazines can enter Canadian schools in bulk as they do, without critical examination on their merits (we have found the Canadian schools' magazine, *World Affairs*, to be much healthier) there is need for elucidation. Not many teachers would have known that *Reader's Digest* was "planting" articles in other magazines and deceiving the public into believing they were making an objective selection when in fact they were carrying on propaganda. Few knew how *Time* tried to counteract Canadian foreign policy. These aspects need to be pointed out. There has been violence done to Canadian sovereignty and young people's minds.

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**The Nature of Violence**

Violence is action which intrudes painfully or harmfully into the physical, psychological, or social well-being of persons or groups.

Violence or its effect may range from trivial to catastrophic.  
Violence may be obvious or subtle.

It may arise naturally or by human design.

Violence may take place against persons or against property.

It may be justified or unjustified, or justified by some standards and not by others.

It may be real or symbolic.

Violence may be sudden or gradual.

### The Nature of Media Violence

Violence depicted in film, television, sound, print, or live performance is not necessarily the same as violence in real life. Things not violent in reality may be violent in their portrayal. Violence presented in the media may reach large numbers of people, whereas real violence may not.

The media may use many artificial devices to lessen or to amplify its emotional and social effects.

Violence depicted may do harm the original violence may not have done – or it may have no impact at all.

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# Appendix

## Survey of Violence and Non-Violence Depicted on Magazine Covers

A Semantic Differential Scale Submitted to Students, Atkinson College, York University.

On December 6, 1976, sixteen magazine covers were shown to a 100-level (approximately first year) class in Communication and Mass Media for the purpose of testing their reaction to violence on these covers as compared with reaction to non-violent covers. The purpose of the test was disguised so that it would seem that we were seeking opinions on whether the students liked covers using drawings, photos, or print messages.

On December 8, the respondents were a 300-level class of 12 students.

The scale was:

*I like this cover*

*I dislike this cover.*

Greatly / A Lot / Somewhat / A Little / Greatly / A Lot / Somewhat / A Little

The range of magazines:

Among the 16 magazines, six placed at intervals were classified by the instructor (author of this paper) as violent in varying degrees. The covers were projected on an opaque projector and students were asked to mark the appropriate part of the scale and not to rate them on artistry of picture or skill in layout or whether they liked that particular magazine, and to ignore any reference on the cover to contents inside. The violent covers are listed below in order of their being like and disliked.

1. *Homemaker's*, Summer 1976:

Photo, four hospital patients shaking fists in protest at treatment

Class 181 - 23% Liked, 77% Disliked

Class 355 - 33% Liked, 67% Disliked

2. *Maclean's*, March 22, 1976

Leather-jacketed figure with machine gun (article inside on Carlos, "The Jackal")

Class 181 - 23 % Liked, 77% Disliked

Class 355 - 25% Liked, 75% Disliked

3. *Maclean's*, May 3, 1976:

Dark, semi-focused figure with sun glasses, pointing revolver at reader (article inside on Terror in Belfast)

Class 181 - 43% Liked, 57% Disliked

Class 355 - 33% Liked, 67% Disliked

4. *More*, November, 1976:

A magazine for media watchers: time-bomb made of dynamite, held by hand protruding from street manhole on top half of cover; lower half, darkly limned bearded figure of printer

Class 181 - 47% Liked, 53% Disliked

Class 355 - 33% Liked, 67% Disliked

5. *Maclean's*, Feb. 23/76:

Three figures, doctor, policeman, nurse as "middle-class workers" in revolt, clenched fists, protest signs

Class 181 - 47% Liked, 53% Disliked

Class 355 - 50% Liked, 50% Disliked

6. *Quest*, June, 1976:

Revolver and "the noose" for hanging.

Class 181 - 53% Liked, 47% Disliked

Class 355 - 33% Liked, 67% Disliked

It may be seen from the above that 61 per cent of the choices of the 181 class showed dislike of the violence covers as a whole in varying degrees from "greatly" to "a little." The other 41 per cent actually liked these covers. Of these latter, however, only five choices (about three per cent) showed liking at the intense "Like greatly" level, compared with 26 showing dislike at the "greatly" level - about five times as many.

The cover scoring the highest number of "greatly disliked" votes was that of the shadowy figure pointing the revolver at the reader. Nine of the 30 students found it thus - twice as many for that one slot as the average of "greatly disliked" for all six violence covers.

In the more advanced 355 class, which was too small to record levels of significance, 65 per cent of the "votes" went against the six violence covers. But, interestingly, the cover "greatly disliked" most was again the shadowy figure pointing the revolver directly at the reader.

The other 10 covers among which the violence covers were placed included: *The New Yorker* (humorous gallery cover, March 3, 1975, No. 1 in popularity with the 300-level class); *Outdoor Canada* (photo Coppermine River, May-June 1976); *Chatelaine* (Mother and baby, December 1976); *Canada Green* (no. 1 of 100 level class: Art Gallery water colour of trilliums, undated); *The Center Magazine* (handwritten message, like calligraphy, of James Madison on popular information need, November/December 1976); *FM Guide* (Artwork on ballet by CBC graphic designer Sawada, Dec. 1975); *Maclean's* (cartoon, The Bumsteads in bed, April 1976); *Maclean's* (Baseball players, glass of beer, May 17, 1976); *Redbook* (Woman splashing into water, June 1976); *Psychology Today* (Young couple in treehouse, November 1974).



# Violence and Popular Music

Peter Goddard

*The Toronto Star*  
Toronto, Ontario

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## Introduction

Rock, the dominant form of popular music of the past 20 years was born out of discontent. It developed as a hybrid of two volatile styles – white country music and black rhythm'n'blues – which represented segments of the North American population that were generally excluded from the mainstream of popular culture. In the 1950s this hybrid was adopted by an equally volatile and, at that time, equally ignored segment of the population – the young. Since then rock has become so diverse, embodying so many different styles and "substyles", that it can no longer be considered simply music for the younger generation. Nor can it be said that rock represents only youthful frustration, anger, defiance or anxiousness. Yet to the extent that it does express these feelings, it remains an aggressive kind of music.

This study is not concerned with the complete spectrum of popular music, nor even of rock, but rather with those elements which seem prone to violent effect: the actual sound of the music, the content of the lyrics, the presentation on stage, or the way it has been packaged and marketed. This latter aspect is of particular concern because it involves, in varying degrees, the manipulation of the music's consumers. This manipulation itself is a form of violence.

Any study of popular music's relationship to violence must include some understanding of the music's relationship to the culture which spawned it and to that which it in turn spawned. As Grier Marcus has noted, there are several significant differences between the popular music preferences of younger and older audiences. The older styles, he points out, treated the lyrics as the basis for listening. The music was simply a cushion of sorts on which the words rested. The younger listener, he goes on to say, "lives mythically and in depth"; he sees his music "as a place of joy, a non-verbal celebration of the senses".<sup>1</sup> More importantly, this is a shared celebration. Marcus points out that young people will "quote lines and phrases from songs to their elders, but a shared understanding is rarely attained". The same lines, however, quoted to other young listeners "can stop whatever action is in process and return the group to the warmth of a mental community".

From this process, Marcus adds, has grown a shared body of myths. The music becomes "a metaphor linked to a private experience of the individual, and arises out of a memory, a feeling, or a state of existence". The metaphors drawn from these myths "aren't just a matter of fitting the proper words to the proper situation, but of knowing the music is there, somehow, in the same place that the idea is". This is a manner of perception "that allows one to give mood and emotion the force of fact, to believe one's instinctual reaction more than someone else's statistical analysis or logical argument". Indeed, it is the perception itself which "structures and rationalizes itself into a metaphor, not on the basis of a

'logical' relationship, but because of the power of music and song to reach into the patterns of memory and response".

Hence, the "meaning", "message", "statement", or "theme" of a particular song is often activated by something other than the lyrics – perhaps by a particular phrase, a chord, a certain rhythmic pattern or by an interaction of a variety of these elements. Moreover this matrix of sounds may activate different responses of varying intensities in different listeners. A song's real "meaning" is thus interiorized and does not lend itself to verbal description. Phil Spector, a producer of rock records, when asked about the meaning of lyrics replied that "It's not what I say it means, it's what it makes you feel."<sup>2</sup>

The relationships between various aspects of a song can be more important in delineating the song's meaning than the individual aspects themselves. An innocuous lyric can appear in a loud, aggressive, even hostile song; conversely, a lyric outlining some distinctly violent idea may be treated with a particularly pliant, and softly flowing phrase. It is often the distinct and ironic contrast between the content and the way in which it is expressed that precludes a song from being a call to violence. The song and its performance may be violent, but the audience understands that it is only a part of an act. Iggy Pop, an American rock singer who frequently cuts and bruises himself during his flamboyant performances sees this "act" as "my personal environment where I can really express what I want to express. Outside of this environment, I think many of my ideas would be banned by society. But with my music all around me I feel safe to say what I want to say."<sup>3</sup>

Here a distinction must be made between rock acts and performances of other forms of music. A concert of symphonic music is an act of sorts, in which the music is presented *to* an audience; meaning is derived from the music. A rock act, however, is one in which the music is presented *with* the audience's participation; meaning is invested in the music. Thus, the rock act becomes an "environment" for the audience as well as for the performer. It is an act in which everyone participates. Popular music, then, must be regarded as a social as well as an artistic phenomenon.

## The Pop Music Event

From its beginning, rock has been a communal kind of music. The first major rock star, Elvis Presley, developed his following initially through live appearances. The excitement generated by these performances, as reported in the media, created a demand for his records among those who could not see him live. Thus, a cycle was initiated: exciting concerts created exciting news events that increased record sales; these in turn guaranteed even larger crowds and more excitement at subsequent concerts.

This pattern has not changed. The marketing efforts

behind the current best-selling group, The Bay City Rollers, were directed first at television. "If we can show the kids out there girls screaming at the Rollers during a television show", said the band's North American promoter, Sid Bernstein, "the enthusiasm will catch on".<sup>4</sup>

A distinction must be made, however, between two types of pre-planned pop music events, and between the problems, even the violence, that each type has engendered. Essentially, it is a distinction between motives. While one kind of event has been promoted as a musical event, the other has been planned as a "scene" – a "thing to do", or a "place to be". It is not my intention to detail the many incidents – injuries resulting from the crush of a crowd, fainting, feet cut on broken glass, bad drug trips, et cetera – which have occurred throughout the history of pop music concerts. Rather, I intend to outline some of those events which were planned in such a way that violence was inevitable.

### **Rock Festivals**

With the development of a new type of popular music in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and with the understanding of its extra-musical importance, a new kind of concert- and festival-planning emerged. This planning centred around the idea that the concert or festival should be an "event", one that was unique, and therefore important to the members of the pop music culture.<sup>5</sup> Such an event would be seen as a symbol of this culture's communal identity, just as the music itself would be a symbol of a listener's private identity. Thus, the early Elvis Presley and early Beatles concerts provided opportunities for fans to display certain communal characteristics, such as hair- or clothing-styles. Such was the success of the concerts that, in the 1960s, further concerts and festivals were organized as "events".

One of the first of these was the Fantasy Faire and Magic Mountain Music Festival held atop Mt. Tamalpais near San Francisco in June 1967.<sup>6</sup> Since profits from the event were being donated to a ghetto charity, the festival attracted the free services of the Jefferson Airplane, The Byrds, The Doors, Country Joe McDonald, Dionne Warwick and Smokey Robinson. This festival was so successful – some 15,000 people showed up, each paying \$2 – that, two weeks later, a similar festival was held in nearby Monterey.

The Monterey International Pop Festival radically altered the nature of pop music presentations.<sup>7</sup> Although only 30,000 people attended, 1,200 press passes were issued. The resulting publicity gave the Monterey festival an importance far beyond the quality of the music actually heard there. It became the first true "media event" in rock. Janis Joplin, Otis Redding and Jimi Hendrix became international figures; the idea of the peace-loving "flower child" was popularized; and a film version of the festival made the idea of large-scale

gatherings all the more appealing. Moreover, although Monterey was a financial failure, it proved to record companies, movie companies and other pop music insiders that considerable profits could be made from large-scale pop events. The very idea of a massed gathering was its own attraction.

### *Violence at Festivals*

The "scene" provided a certain anonymity to its participants who felt they could therefore function more freely within it. Clashes with society outside the scene, then, were inevitable: poorly planned concerts and festivals brought two opposing generations into direct conflict. This kind of conflict was evident at the Newport '69 festival held in Los Angeles, at festivals held in Denver and Northridge in the same year, and at a concert given by Sly And The Family Stone in Chicago's Grant Park in July, 1970. Each of these events were held in an urban setting which, despite obvious advantages (easy transportation, housing, medical facilities, et cetera) created a number of problems. A variety of elements attracted to each event, including bikers, political activists, as well as freaks, took the opportunity to demonstrate their dislike of the system and its police. The police, in turn, tended to over-react when confronted by such large groups of volatile people. In a clash between the police and youth at the Sly And The Family Stone concert, three youths were shot and hundreds more were injured, including 91 police officers. There were 165 arrests, and numerous stores in downtown Chicago were vandalized. As a result, all city-sponsored rock concerts in Chicago were cancelled, as were many other concerts and festivals around the country.<sup>8</sup>

Festivals became pressure points for the various factions participating in or wanting to make money from the rock community, with each faction attempting to use the festival for its own purposes. A coalition of 17 white and black radical groups made such demands on the promoters of New York's Randall Island festival that the promoters were finally forced to declare it a free festival. Subsequently, more and more fans came to festivals expecting the gate-crash. In addition, performers' fees escalated. Jimi Hendrix, who had received \$500 for appearing at Monterey, demanded \$75,000 for Randall's Island.<sup>9</sup>

Rock festivals were no longer merely events held by and for the rock community. They had become potentially profitable commercial ventures. This resulted in a particularly cynical process through which promoters sold rock back to its own community, billing the festivals not as profit-making ventures, but as rock cultural events. As one fan explained during a Toronto rock festival, "I know I'm getting ripped-off, but I don't know how to avoid it if I want to hear the music."<sup>10</sup>

The media, too, have often been part of this manipulative process. The modest success of the Monterey Pop movie and the much larger success of the Woodstock festival – a feature-length film and five "live" albums –

indicated to the media industries that the audience for pop music was much larger than that which attended live performances. In a sense, the media began “translating” the pop music event for the mass audience. More and more concerts were staged as media events. Musicians like Alice Cooper and those in the band, Kiss, have designed their shows for either television or film, or both. It is the 1969 Altamont Festival, however, that provides the most telling example of media manipulation of a pop event.

#### *Altamont: A Watershed*

Altamont resulted from an attempt at pop music myth-making, an attempt to create a scene where otherwise none would have existed. In the fall of 1969 the Rolling Stones were touring North America. The tour was to end in San Francisco, the highly-publicized centre of North American rock and roll, but the Stones were unable to obtain a permit to play in the city. The nearby Sears Point Raceway was selected as an alternate site only a week before the scheduled event. Just 30 hours before the concert was to begin, the raceway owners, Filmways Incorporated, demanded exclusive distribution rights to the projected film of the festival.<sup>11</sup> The Stones rejected this power play and once again switched sites. This time they chose the semi-abandoned Altamont Raceway which normally accommodated a maximum of 8000 people for demolition derbies. (Their concert was expected to draw several hundred thousand rock fans.) All of the construction that had been started at the Sears Point Raceway had to be dismantled and reconstructed at Altamont in only 24 hours and, because a movie was to be made of the concert, priority was given to lighting and sound equipment. As a result, the staging area was hastily constructed; the backstage area not properly cordoned off, and the stage itself was only four feet high, instead of the usual 10 to 20 feet.

To compensate for this inadequacy, a motorcycle gang, the Hell’s Angels, was brought in to protect the stage and those on it. The gang, however, did most of the damage, fighting with people in the audience, with the musicians and, finally, amongst themselves. The band preceding the Rolling Stones, Crosby, Stills and Nash, finished its set at dusk. But the Stones waited an additional 75 minutes to allow for the use of the special lighting effects that had been planned to make the Stones’ performance appear especially dramatic on film. The crowd grew increasingly restless soon after the Stones appeared on stage. A fight broke out and a young black was stabbed to death by a member of the motorcycle gang. As soon as it was known that the cameras had managed to record something of the stabbing, Columbia Pictures offered \$1 million for the movie.<sup>12</sup>

Altamont proved to be a watershed for rock culture. George Paul Csicsery wrote:

Altamont, like the massacre of Song My, exploded the myth of innocence for a section of America. As the country grows more

sophisticated, it learns to confront its own guilt . . . The media projected Woodstock. A great people event put on by the younger generation to celebrate its freedom . . . Look at all the hippies, America. They’re grooving while the rest of you schmucks have to watch it on television, because you’re too uptight. The media needs hippies now more than ever, to show there is still someone in America who can dig on a scene. Altamont was a lesson in micro-society with no holds barred. Bringing a lot of people together used to be cool. Human Be-Ins, Woodstock, even a Hell’s Angel funeral, were creative communal events because their center was everywhere. People would play together, performing, participating, sharing, and going home with a feeling that somehow the communal idea would replace the grim isolation wrought on us by a jealous competitive mother culture. But at Altamont we were the mother culture. The locust generation came to consume crumbs from the hands of an entertainment industry we helped create.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Rock as Revolution**

Altamont became a symbol for the rock community. As Sol Stern points out:

Neither *Time* nor *Life*, both orgiastic over Woodstock, carried a word about Altamont. *Newsweek*, which went ape over Woodstock in two consecutive issues, finally ran a story three weeks late; it was full of misinformation about the Hell’s Angels and said almost nothing about the concert. *The New York Times* which had fully covered Woodstock . . . ran a short dispatch on the inside pages of its Sunday edition. The deflation of the Woodstock myth so soon after they helped inflate it, was apparently something the masters of the mass media were not up to.<sup>14</sup>

But for the rock community Altamont was the final confirmation of something it had suspected throughout the late 1960s. Not only had its sense of community dissolved through a variety of internal pressures, but what had once been central to the community, the music, was no longer within its control. As Jonathan Eisen noted just after Altamont, rock festivals and rock concerts functioned as “counter institutions” where the so-called counterculture could create its own authentic sense of community. Billed as tribal gatherings, they were “nothing more than very good reasons to forget that the real tribes have yet to be created and to forget the frustration and rage at not being able or perhaps willing to change any of the repressive conditions”.<sup>15</sup>

These “counter institutions”, then, became rallies for rock’s messages. As Eisen wrote, “rock music for many, myself included, existed as instant revolution. Rock has turned on many people to the possibility of revolution, to the ways that the society comes down on people trying to have peace and independence of spirit.”<sup>16</sup> To others, though, rock’s revolutionary message was muted. To John Sinclair, the political activist who helped organize the White Panther Party, true revolutionaries “are not going to be persuaded by a joint and a V-sign . . . [the] ‘owners’, the people who control our lives and our destinies for the time being (but not for much longer!) are not going to be moved to give up their insane control and greed by a bunch of long-

haired people sticking two fingers in the air and moaning 'give peace a chance' no matter how groovy or how right these freaks are."<sup>17</sup>

The distinction between Sinclair's kind of revolution and Eisen's is important to note. Sinclair's is a product and a part of the political activism that developed in the 1960s with civil-rights marches, the founding of the SDS and Black Panther parties, and the anti-war demonstrations. Eisen's is a more passive kind of revolution and more symbolic in nature:

Disgusted with the straight totalitarianism of the larger society, many have tended to seek their own rebellion in terms of style alone. Seeing the conformity and the rigidity, the suppression of the unconscious, they have reacted with total freakiness. Straight equals bad, freak equals free and therefore good. This in turn has led to a permissiveness, an encompassing tolerance that puts the straight society and the pigs uptight. Doing one's own thing is really the byword for the culture.<sup>18</sup>

Hence, the cult of the outlaw, the Easy Rider who lived by his own code; and hence the adoration of the rock star, who is living proof of the successful defiance of society. This cult, Eisen noted,

has grown in recent years as it has become apparent that much of what was considered criminal in the past must now be seen as justifiable in a society that is itself organized along criminal lines . . . . Nevertheless the outlaw cult, while potentially revolutionary has reached a point where it is helping sunder social fabric, but in potentially destructive, privatistic directions rather than in ways that can help accommodate new and more humane ways of organizing itself socially . . . this violent individualism has frequently clothed itself in the rhetoric of rebellion and revolution and while calling for social justice it has been able to mask the more basic purposes of individual catharsis and private gain. I think that much of the hip movement in America today is largely an egotistical trip, fed by the music industry and glorified by its own ideology with an acrid strain of selfishness.<sup>19</sup>

Yet it is this very image, the rock'n'roll outlaw, that the recording industry continues to market. Michael Lydon writes:

So the kids are talking revolution and smoking dope? Well, so are the record companies, in massive advertising campaigns that co-opt the language of revolution so thoroughly that you'd think they were on the streets themselves. "The Man can't bust our music," reads one Columbia ad; another urged (with a picture of a diverse group of kids apparently turning on), "Know who your friends are. And look and see and touch and be together. Then listen. We do."<sup>20</sup>

Even many musicians themselves realize the importance of appearing to be outside the "system". Terry Knight, a rock promoter and former manager of the Detroit-based band, Grand Funk Railroad, once ran ads showing all the negative quotes the band had received from critics. "They're establishment," Knight explained, "the critics, I mean. I don't want them to like us. Because kids hate critics and therefore will like us."<sup>21</sup>

## The Industry

The music industry's exploitation of its music, its

musicians and, finally, its audience has been consistent throughout the development of popular music. According to Lydon,

From the start, rock has been commercial in its very essence. It was never an art form that just happened to make money, nor a commercial undertaking that sometimes became art. Its art was synonymous with its business. The movies are perhaps the closest to rock in their aesthetic involvement with the demands of profitability, but even they once had an arty tradition which scorned the pleasure of the masses. Yet paradoxically it was the unabashed commerciality of rock which gave rise to the hope that it would be a 'revolutionary' cultural form of expression.<sup>22</sup>

The recording industry (whose earnings have grown from \$1 billion a year in 1968 to an estimated \$10 billion a year now<sup>23</sup>) acts as a filter between the musicians and their potential audiences. To understand how this filtering process operates, one need look no farther than the very beginning of rock.

As noted earlier by Richard Goldstein, rock represents a fusion of white and black music. It is important to note just how both of these cultures found value in their respective popular music before this fusion took place. Prior to the emergence of rock in the early 1950s, music favoured by white audiences was less rhythmic in nature than that preferred by black audiences. There were also considerable differences in the way each culture approached lyrics and melody. In white pop songs, for instance, romantic or sophisticated sentiments were popular whereas in the blues, for example, lyrics embodied the singer's own experience.

While the whole European (white) tradition strives for regularity – of pitch, of time, of timbre, and of vibrato – the African (black) tradition strives precisely for the negation of these elements. In language, the African tradition aims at circumlocution rather than an exact definition. The direct statement is considered crude and unimaginative: the veiling of all contents in ever-changing paraphrases is considered the criterion of intelligence and personality. In music the same tendency toward obliquity and ellipsis is noticeable: no note is attacked straight: the voice or instrument always approaches it from above or below, plays around the implied pitch without ever remaining any length of time, and departs from it without ever having committed itself to a single meaning. The timbre is veiled and paraphrased by constantly changing vibrato, tremolo and overtone effects. The timing and accentuation, finally, are not stated but implied or suggested. The denying or withholding of all signposts.<sup>24</sup>

Black popular music was a major source of material for the recording industry in the early 1950s, although most of the white listeners would never have known it. Through a process known as "covering", black hits were adapted and re-recorded by whites for a white market.

"Cover" versions like Elvis Presley's "cover" of Big Mama Thornton's *Hound Dog* not only out-sold the original, it also prevented the original from selling as many copies as it otherwise might have. In this way, the record industry denied popularity and, hence, financial success to the very artists who created the music.

It was the interest of white teenagers that first

prompted the record and radio industries to become interested in black music. However, neither of the industries, which were both owned and operated by whites, was willing to leave this music alone. They viewed European musical values regarding tone, intonation, form, and overall regularity as absolute standards.<sup>25</sup> Musical styles which did not conform to these standards were dismissed as “bad musicianship”. The black versions were regarded as coarse, rough and unsophisticated. The cover versions were “an improvement”. Yet, in this process of “improving” a record, the lyrics as well as the music were changed. An early rhythm’n’blues hit, *Work With Me Annie*, which contained hints of sexuality, became *Dance With Me Henry*. Whereas the original black recordings reflected an earthy reality, the white “covers” emphasized popular romantic-love imagery and themes.

This manipulation of popular music continues today. The specifics have changed, certainly: black music is no longer censored as it was in the early 1950s. This change is due mainly to the efforts of certain white musicians and deejays who directed attention to the original sources of the music they played, and also to the financial success of certain black record companies like Motown. Indeed, the reasons for the manipulation have been reversed. Now that the recording industry is no longer attempting to suppress the so-called outlaw aspect of popular music, it seems all too willing to cash in on it.

Rather than being an example of how freedom can be achieved within the capitalist structure, the rock industry is an example of how capitalism can, almost without a conscious effort, deceive those who it oppresses. Rather than being liberated heroes, rock and roll stars are captives on a leash . . . All the talk of “rock revolution”, talk that is assiduously cultivated by the rock industry, is an attempt to disguise that plight.<sup>26</sup>

Nor have rock stars been ignorant of this problem.

In his song, *Maggie’s Farm*, Bob Dylan sings:

He gives me a nickel  
He gives me a dime  
He asks me with a grin  
If I’m having a good time  
And he fines me  
Every time I slam the door.

Mick Jagger, lead singer and chief songwriter for the Rolling Stones, wrote an attack at the record industry in his song, *Under-Assistant West Coast Promotion Man*. While Roger McQuinn and Chris Hillman in their song, *So You Want To Be A Rock’N’Roll Star* noted:

The price you paid  
For your riches and fame  
Was it a strange game  
You’re a little insane

All the money that came  
And the public acclaim  
Don’t forget who you are  
You’re a rock’n’roll star.<sup>27</sup>

### The Musicians

Since Altamont, since the deaths of stars like Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and Jim Morrison, all from drug overdoses, and with the disappearance of the sense of community that once surrounded rock music, popular musicians have begun to take a far more pragmatic attitude to both their careers and their public. Alice Cooper, for one, sees his function as producing entertainment for the masses. In the early 1970s, Cooper, who was born Vincent Furnier, claimed he was using a woman’s name “because I want to make everyone realize there’s some male and female in each one of them, that we aren’t just what we seem to be.”<sup>28</sup> Soon, though, it became evident that Cooper’s decision to blur sexual identity was less of an intellectual consideration than one designed for reasons of show business. His shows soon became more elaborate and gruesome, with mock-decapitations, a simulated hanging and a bizarre entourage of grotesques, including dancers dressed as spiders and a cyclops-like monster. “But it’s just fantasy,” Cooper claimed. “It’s just fun. What I’m trying to do is put on a show the way Hollywood did years ago. An extravaganza.”<sup>29</sup>

Cooper’s success, however, created the need on the part of other entertainers to produce even bigger and more lavish displays. As was the case with the trend toward giantism in rock festivals in the 1960s, these more recent “shows” have all too often been produced without regard to their effect on their audiences. Sound systems have been made more elaborate and capable of producing ever louder volumes, even though there is some question as to whether this volume may be harmful to hearing.<sup>30</sup> Ticket prices have escalated in order to support the costs of the equipment being used. Consequently, many fans either cannot afford tickets, or cannot buy them because ticket scalpers have purchased large blocks of tickets to resell at further inflated prices. “And this is why you see so many fights at concerts these days,” explained one 17-year-old fan at a recent Toronto concert. “It’s become such a big deal, going to concerts, that everyone over-reacts. Everyone’s nervous, you know? Everyone expects so much from it that they’re on edge all the time.”<sup>31</sup>

### The Performances

This trend toward ever-increasing lavishness affects not only the externals of the show, the lighting, sound equipment, et cetera; the need to produce a radical concept behind each show has increased as well. Cooper’s grotesqueries pale in comparison with those of the rock band, Kiss.

A typical Kiss show includes the four band members strutting around the stage in tight black leather suits,

each draped in chains and wearing jackboots. Their faces are smeared in white paste make-up which gives them a skull-like mask quality. During each show bassist Gene Simmons makes lascivious motions with his tongue, seems to breathe fire and drools simulated blood on the stage. On the jacket of one of their albums, where the members of Kiss have written descriptions of the way their music makes them feel, several of them mention the distinct sado-masochistic pleasures they derive from their costumes. Yet Gene Simmons maintains that "it's just a show. Sure, I know we've been called Nazi rock. But that's not it at all. Our fans don't see it that way, 'cause they just come out to have a good time and see a good show. We're just trying to put on the best show they've ever seen."<sup>32</sup>

Kiss's image is directly opposite that of the 1960s rock stars. Those musicians dressed the way their audiences did, with long hair, beards, et cetera, and generally presented a soft, ill-defined image. Kiss, on the other hand, is "hard": their faces and heads are masked; their clothes are, in effect, uniforms. Yet the choice of this style is not accidental. As another singer, Rod Taylor, remarks: "Young people today are beginning to like this hard, uniform image: look at the trend toward short hair. People want discipline now, they want order in their lives. No wonder there's so much interest in World War II and the Nazis. It's not the Nazis who are popular but the ideas of order and discipline." Taylor who performs as Roderick Falconer, has decided to exploit what he sees to be an emerging trend. His recent United Artists' album, *New Nation*, shows him in jackboots, striding as if on the march. He has also invented his own logo which consists of a metallic silver falcon surrounded by an oak-leaf cluster and standing on top of the planet. "All the ideas that came out of Woodstock," Taylor says, "are false. The whole hippy idea was false, too."<sup>33</sup>

Taylor's observations and feelings represent less a reversal of trends than a continuation of those which were started in the early 1950s along with the beginning of current pop music styles. Popular music has long been regarded by its youthful listeners as symbolic of its listeners' life-style, one that is quite distinct from that of the older generation. Naturally, if the generation which grew to maturity in the 1960s has retained some elements of the 1960s style (longish hair, leftist political sympathies), it seems inevitable that the new young generation would evolve a different and contradictory style. The young generation of the 1950s rejected the sentimentalism of the crooning, ballad style of the 1930s and 1940s in favour of something "tougher" and "more realistic". In the same way, the young generation of the 1970s is rejecting the sentiments of the 1960s ("love", "everything's groovy", "give peace a chance"), and is evolving its own set of metaphors and images.

### The Music, Lyrics and Censorship

"If the Establishment knew what today's music was

saying," one New York musician remarked, "not what the words are saying, but what the music itself is saying, then they would just turn thumbs down on it. They'd ban it, they'd smash all the records, and they'd arrest anyone who tried to play it."<sup>34</sup> Yet popular music in the past 25 years has indeed been censored or at least, restricted in ways that amount to censorship. In Canada, not the least of these restrictions has been the dominance of a foreign-owned recording industry. The results of this domination cannot be accurately calculated, as they deal with matters of musical style, musical taste and, in a broader sense, the ability of a culture to see itself mirrored by its arts.

Since its inception in the mid-1950s, rock radio in English-speaking Canada has featured records by American and British artists. In Quebec, there has been much less of an imbalance between domestic and imported music because of the language barrier. Consequently, popular music in Quebec has developed a more pronounced indigenous style.

To encourage both domestic artists and domestic recording companies, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) instituted "Canadian content" regulations in 1971. These required that a certain proportion of the music played on AM radio stations be Canadian. This measure has been successful to the extent that several small, independent record companies, like True North Records and Attic Records, have survived and have produced Canadian talent. Unfortunately, the CRTC's regulations have not been able to improve the quality of the content, nor the style of the music itself.

With few exceptions, most of whom come from Quebec, musicians who are supported by American- or British-owned companies (in short, the companies which control the market), are those who produce music suitable for the American or British markets. At best, this has produced a homogeneity of musical style and, at worst, a style that is directly derived from those found in the United States or England.

For commercial reasons it helps a Canadian musician to sound like a Los Angeles musician, or one from another major music-producing centre; this will at least give him the ability to compete in these markets. The musician, then, censors himself, and the cycle that began in the 1950s, continues. As a result, the music heard in any city in English Canada is similar to that heard in any American city. Furthermore, since American bands like Kiss are likely to be heard just as frequently as Canadian bands, they become just as much a part of the Canadian audience's experience. Thus, Canadians are exposed to music that, were it not for the domination of the American recording industry, would not be available here. If the music is of a violent nature – and in Kiss's case, it is – this violence also becomes part of the Canadian listener's experience.

There have been more direct forms of censorship, the most common having been suppression or attempted

suppression of song lyrics. It is significant that censorship has been exercised on lyrics dealing with the subjects of drugs and sex, and rarely on lyrics dealing with violence. In March 1971, a directive issued by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) of the United States called for at least one official in every U.S. broadcasting station to be responsible for the content and meaning of rock lyrics. Those broadcasters who ignored this directive invited the question "as to whether continued operation of the station is in the public interest."<sup>35</sup> One FCC Commissioner, Nicholas Johnson, dissented, claiming that the order was a "brazen attack . . . by a group of establishmentarians to determine what youth can say and hear."<sup>36</sup> Yet there were those who heeded the FCC. Gordon McLendon, an owner of a chain of American radio stations, tried to eliminate all songs referring to drugs from air-play on his network of 13 stations.<sup>37</sup>

In Canada there has not been any such blanket attempt at censorship. "The CRTC has more or less left each station to be responsible for what it does,"<sup>38</sup> explained Wes Armstrong, the vice-president of CHUM Radio in Toronto. Still, when a record has been kept off the air, it is because of references to drugs or sex. Sometimes, though, suspicions of references have been enough. In the United States, for instance, the program director of Gordon McLendon's station in Houston claimed that while the musicians knew "what they're saying on those records, . . . old John Q. Public doesn't. We're tired of them putting it over on John Q."<sup>39</sup>

It seems that the primary way the musicians were "putting it over" was through lyrics which were deliberately ambiguous, arcane or slurred so as to be inaudible. As critic Richard Goldstein noted: "Rock lyricists today try to invest their slang with a depth of ambiguity that allows the words to be heard equally well on all levels right down to the underground. No one doubts that the purpose of so-called psychedelic rock is to reconstruct an actual drug experience."<sup>40</sup> Yet censorship of ambiguous lyrics misses the point of the lyric's place in current popular music. As critic Paul Williams says in his book *Outlaw Blues*, "you can't hear all the words, so you can pretty much contextualize as you like."<sup>41</sup>

The relative importance of lyrics was discussed by Kent Higgins in an unpublished 1971 Master's thesis in journalism at the University of Colorado entitled "A Media Habits Pilot Study of Delinquent Children in Jefferson County."<sup>42</sup> Higgins collected data about middle-class delinquents in a Denver suburban county and compared their views and uses of media with those of volunteers from the county's public schools. He noted that the majority of the "non-delinquents" found a song's lyrics attractive, while the "delinquents" tested in the county's detention centre favoured the song's beat. In noting the appeal of the lyrics themselves, though, Higgins' study came to several conclusions:

### 1. Relationships in non-delinquents' favourite songs

were of the traditional stereotype of the love-marriage variety; relationships in delinquents' songs were frequently temporary and not often stereotyped.

2. Non-delinquents favoured lyrics about a team of actors, about a couple or several couples; delinquents' songs revolved around a primary actor;

3. Non-delinquents' songs were grounded in a "benevolent fantasy"; delinquents' songs were grounded in a "hostile reality".

4. Love and sexual anticipation were the most frequent goals expressed in non-delinquents' songs; emotional adjustment was the goal in the favourites of the delinquents.

5. The actors in the non-delinquents' songs were likely to achieve their goals and unlikely to encounter much difficulty in doing so; delinquents' songs frequently depicted stumbling blocks which the primary actor approached with a certain amount of fatalism.

6. Non-delinquents' songs tied the resolutions of events to the kindness on the part of the actors involved; a certain percentage of the delinquents' songs saw either no resolution or fate being the prime determinant, with work and intellect being shown as the only possible means of success.

Higgins' study also noted that delinquents chose songs that were "a little more likely" than non-delinquents to be best-sellers; delinquents as a group seemed more well-informed about popular music than were non-delinquents; non-delinquent males and females were more likely to choose the same song as favourites than were delinquent males and females; and delinquents placed more of an emphasis on music in their lives than did non-delinquents.

This study underscores, to some degree, the popularity of the "outlaw" image in pop music and the recording industry's need to cater to it. It accounts for the constant regeneration of this image. As one generation of former "outlaw" musicians grows older, richer, and more a part of the middle-class establishment, another generation arrives to replace it, usually claiming an even "tougher" life style and offering a "tougher" image.

### Punk Rock

The current claimants to this image are the "punk rockers". Punk rock, which started in New York, was largely a "return-to-the-Fifties" manifestation. The bands involved performed a simplistic type of rock and roll and disavowed any kind of image except one of toughness. However, the English version of punk rock, played by bands like Clash, The Damned, Buzzcock, and the Sex Pistols, has caused the greatest furor. As noted by a Reuters dispatch from London, "their sound and the way they play is not very different from the rest of British pop music. What is hitting the headlines is the remarkable appearance and aggressive behavior of the punk rockers."<sup>43</sup> What has motivated this behaviour and appearance, according to the musicians involved, is

the lack of “toughness” on the part of the older and more established bands. According to the lead singer of the Sex Pistols, who calls himself Johnny Rotten, “What’s happening now shouldn’t just seem like a strong reaction against the music scene. It bloody well is. The old are scared of us. They don’t want the change. It makes them irrelevant to what’s going on now and they know it.”<sup>44</sup>

Yet the current notoriety of the Sex Pistols depends upon manipulation of the media and the media’s willingness to be manipulated. The band was formed by a 30-year-old former art student, Malcolm McLaren. (He also runs a boutique called Sex that deals in leather and bondage clothing.)

McLaren encouraged the musicians he had brought together to write songs about their own experience. The results were titles like *Anarchy in the U.K.*, and lyrics like “God save the Queen/ God save the Fascist regime/ It made you morons into human H-bombs.”<sup>45</sup> With the music has come a certain punk style, one that is intended to give a depth of experience to a live performance. The style, as described by *Rolling Stone*, includes “no drugs, but an overdose of booze. Hair: short and often dyed. Clothes: a bizarre cross-pollination of rubber and chopped, torn and remodeled jumble couture, whatever fit – or, better still, didn’t – with chains, safety pins and Nazi insignias for jewellery. Clothes to match the acid, often bad-tempered atmosphere of the gigs.”<sup>46</sup> At the first punk rock festival held in London (September 1976), the second night of concerts was cancelled when a girl in the audience lost an eye after being struck by a piece of flying glass.<sup>47</sup> As McLaren pointed out, “it’s been overstated by the media. But what violence there is, is genuine. The business has taken music away from these kids and they are trying to seize it back.”<sup>48</sup> The music business, though, does not entirely loathe punk rock. The Sex Pistols, for example, were offered a reported \$70,000 contract by EMI records even though the band had been performing for less than a year.<sup>49</sup> EMI later rejected the deal after a public furor generated by the Sex Pistols’ use of profane language on a national television show.<sup>50</sup> The day after the show, 1,800 copies of the band’s single, *Anarchy In The U.K.*, were sold. This was despite the facts that the song was ignored by the BBC and that union labour at EMI’s factory refused to manufacture the record. A scheduled appearance by this group and other punk rockers at the University of East Anglia was cancelled by the school’s vice-chancellor on the grounds of “public safety”.<sup>51</sup>

According to the Reuter dispatch:

In reality, the punks don’t really care about anything, and politics is probably the least of their interests. If the British groups have anything in common, it is the boredom and anger created by a working-class background in a time of austerity and disenchantment with the current state of popular music. This last point is wide-spread and understandable. Since the advent of the Beatles, pop has moved steadily away from its working-class roots towards advanced electronics and other

intricate forms. There isn’t much for working-class youth in economically depressed Britain to identify with when they see the Rolling Stones, for instance, jetting around the world with brief stopovers for highly-priced and musically sloppy concerts. The punk rock groups are really just filling a vacuum.<sup>52</sup>

They’re also offering comment on what they see as the safe, secure and middle-class world of rock. The lead singer of one Toronto band began a club appearance by extinguishing a burning cigarette on his arm; he then asked the audience where it would like him to cut himself. “It’s nihilistic, sure,” said a friend of the band. “But what it’s saying is that we don’t feel any more, or, if we do, the only feeling we have left is pain. It’s like putting your finger in a light socket – sometimes you get hurt, sometimes it wakes you up. Besides, it’s a lot more real than Alice Cooper pretending to hang himself. It’s a death trip, but for real.”<sup>53</sup>

### The Disappearance of Romance

A recent thematic analysis of 772 rock songs covering the years 1955-1973 indicates that, to some degree, the disillusionment and violence of the punk rockers may be symptomatic of a broader trend in pop music.<sup>54</sup> The study conducted by Irwin Kantor produced nine categories of popular songs: love songs, drug songs, religion songs, comedy or novelty songs, “area” songs (those dedicated to a particular place, such as the Beach Boys’ California-based surfing songs), revolution and social change songs, dance songs, advice songs and others. The years used as a frame of reference were divided into three periods: 1955-1963; 1964-1969; and 1970-1973.

The results showed that the number of love songs decreased over this period, while the number of songs devoted to drugs increased. In fact, according to this study, a smaller percentage of songs were devoted to the drug theme during the peak years of the “drug movement” (1964 to 1969) than in the years that followed. Similarly, there was a greater percentage of songs devoted to revolution or social change in the 1970-1973 period than there was during the mid-1960s when the protest movement was supposedly at its height.

Kantor analyzed the songs as media, or, in his words, as “information channels”. However, he makes a distinction between two types of information channels, one which he calls “discursive”, meaning language, the other called “non-discursive”, meaning “those elements which cannot be overtly expressed, such as gestures, expression, connotations and mystiques”. In his conclusions about the trends of pop music he remarks that the 1970s “saw a decrease in the use of love as a non-discursive element. Therefore, other non-discursive elements in addition to love were sought. Increases in drug use, religious cultism, and rebellion became manifest through rock music . . . For the teenagers of the sixties and early seventies, rock music became their

saviour, through which they sought to alleviate feelings of despair, boredom, melancholy, and perhaps even hopelessness.<sup>55</sup>

A pop song becomes a metaphor for the total experience of its listener; it may both recall and reaffirm latent images. Because popular music is generally experienced on a day-to-day basis through radio (and to a lesser degree, through concerts, clubs and festivals) any alteration in image is usually the product of an ongoing process. The "cosmic storm-trooper" image cultivated by Kiss would not enjoy its current popularity had it not been for Alice Cooper's on-stage depictions of brutality. And Cooper's success with a visual treatment of violence would not likely have been acceptable were it not for the sheer power generated by the sound systems used by rock bands in the late 1960s.

This increasing emphasis on power, whether through the sheer volume of the music or through the image of a particular band, explains to a great extent why rock fares less well on film and television than it does when heard live. Rarely are the sound systems used in cinemas capable of reproducing the sheer volume of sound that is produced either on a home stereo set or at a live concert. Television sound is even weaker. Moreover, the image of a band is altered when it is reproduced on film or even live television.

Because both media place several controlling agents (whether a director, television producer or simply the size of the screen) between the act and audience, the feeling of the essential one-to-one relationship that exists between the audience and the performers at live concerts cannot be achieved. The televised or filmic image actually interferes with the appreciation of the performance. While simply listening to a record on a stereo set allows the listener's imagination to play with what is heard, a visual image on a screen curtails the use of the imagination. The stereo experience offers an alternative to a live concert: the film or television experience offers only a poor substitute. While rock stars like Alice Cooper and Kiss have appeared on television, the bridge between the mass television audience and the smaller, more selective rock audience has never been completed. And as long as the television audience is considered the audience that reflects the mainstream of North American culture, the rock audience, however socially stable it has become in recent years, will always be considered (and usually will consider itself), to be outside this mainstream.

### Stylized Violence in Popular Music

An exploration of violence in pop music, whether the violence is stated or merely implied, must take into account both the sound and the lyrics. These two elements, especially when they are focused and fused by a live presentation complete with costumes, props and on-stage movement, present a total metaphor for the listener's experience. For the purposes of this paper, the violent aspects of popular music can be categorized as

follows: 1) violence-as-art; 2) an appeal to and the appeal of "toughness"; 3) protest; 4) sexism; 5) pop music as a reflection of social violence.

#### Violence-As-Art

Various musicians, from singer Wayne Cochrane in the 1950s, to Peter Townshend of The Who in the 1960s, to Alice Cooper in the 1970s, have incorporated violent acts as a part of their musical presentation. Cochrane, for instance, continues to break furniture and glasses in clubs where he plays, although there is a clause in his contract stipulating that he pay for everything he breaks. Townshend once smashed his guitar at the end of every concert; Cooper was "beaten up" in a mock fight with other members of his band. Townshend best explained this kind of violence when he said:

when I was in art school [at the Ealing School of Art, in England], I got wind of an auto-destructive artist named Gustav Motzger. That really blew my mind! So I introduced the idea of breaking up the instruments as part of the finale of the show; with puffs of smoke and flashes of light. The whole bit. . . Lots of people said, 'That's terrible,' and stuff like that. Some geezers thought we were cheapening our music. But it's not just the destruction of the instrument itself; it's destruction of what you're actually doing. You actually destroy everything — you destroy the guitar, the group's musical line, you destroy the audience's mental participation . . . You see, it's a whole pattern of apprehension and tension, and then relief and the remorse. The whole process of life. The current big, imperishable, holy art is pop music and the break-up routine really says something about it. The ideal, of course, would be for me to get killed in an airplane crash right after a really stupendous performance.<sup>56</sup>

This kind of stylized violence, which has included feedback being forced from the band's amplifiers, was more popular in the 1960s than in the 1970s. "Some would call such behavior destructive," noted Richard Goldstein, who saw in it a "viable sublimation. In other words, it's a hell of a lot more useful than swiping hubcaps."<sup>57</sup>

To a large degree, too, the sheer volume at which groups like The Who, Led Zeppelin, Rush, Aerosmith, Black Sabbath, and Blue Oyster Cult play must be considered a stylized type of violence.

An analysis of a lyric used by any one of these so-called "heavy-metal" bands reveals little of the song's total aural impact. The Who's song, *My Generation*, runs:

People try to put us down  
Just because we get around  
Things they do look awful cold  
Hope I die before I get old.

This is my generation, baby.

Why don't you all f-f-f-fade away?  
Don't try and dig what we all say

I'm not trying to cause a big sensation  
I'm just talking 'bout my generation.  
This is my generation, baby  
My generation.<sup>58</sup>

The pugnacious quality of the line “Why don’t you all f-f-f-fade away?” is counterbalanced by “I’m not trying to cause a big sensation.” But the music throughout, utilizing primary chords played extremely loudly, does indeed create a “big sensation”. Nonetheless, the sensation of violence is more apparent here than any call to violence.

#### *The Appeal of Toughness*

Rock has long celebrated a “tough” life-style whether it be expressed through the love of fast cars, the ability to handle oneself in a fight, or one’s ability to defy society. In the 1950s and the early 1960s, this appeal to toughness was made on a personal level, as in the lyrics to the rhythm’n’blues song, *Duke of Earl* by Earl Edwards, Eugene Dixon and Bernice Williams:

As I walk through this world  
Nothing can stop the Duke of Earl  
And you are my girl  
And no one can hurt you  
Let me hold you,  
'Cause I'm the Duke of Earl.<sup>59</sup>

By the mid-1960s, though, during the more passive days of LSD and “flower-power”, toughness had lost some of its value. In this Skip Spence lyric, *Motorcycle Irene*, it was treated ironically:

I've seen her in the bare  
Where her tattoos and her chains  
Wrap around her body  
Where written are the names  
Of prisons she's been in  
And lovers she has seen.  
Curve-winding, bumping, grinding  
Motorcycle Irene.<sup>60</sup>

In recent years this appeal has returned in a yet more generalized way than in the 1950s. Albums are packaged to look “tough”. Wishbone Ash’s *New England* album shows a scene in black and white that is reminiscent of a concentration camp. In the foreground, a man is carving a pointed stick with his knife blade turned towards the viewer. *The Mind Exploding* album, by Lucifer’s Friend, shows a snake with its jaws open wide, its fangs bared, and rings of thorns surrounding its head. The entire image seems to rise from a fiery ocean like smoke from a nuclear bomb. Within Reach’s album (untitled) shows a hand in a tight leather glove grasping a talisman formed like an eye. Boxer’s *Below The Belt* album depicts a naked woman with a boxing glove seemingly punching her in the navel. Target’s album (untitled) shows a wildcat, snarling at the viewer through openings in a striped target. Roderick

Falconer’s *New Nation* album, described earlier, depicts a jackbooted man strutting in front of a stairway that leads up to a steely-grey emblem.

The lyrics of many of the more recent rock bands also herald a return to a new strength, as with those by drummer Neil Peart recorded by Rush for its *2112* album:

You don't get something for nothing  
You don't get freedom for free  
You won't get wise  
With the sleep still in your eyes  
No matter what your dreams might be.<sup>61</sup>

Yet these projections of toughness and power are only completed at live performances where bands like Rush or Black Sabbath call upon the audience to stand up and wave their fists in time to the metre of a song. The apparent aim at such performances is to forge a unity between the music and the audience.

#### *Protest*

In the 1960s, protest songs were generally more specific than those being written in the 1970s. The civil-rights movement and the anti-Vietnam war movement, each produced a number of songs, from Bob Dylan’s *My Back Pages*, to Bill Frederick’s *Burn, Baby, Burn*, to Buffy Saint-Marie’s *My Country, 'Tis of Thy People You're Dying* to Ronnie Petersen’s *War Blues*. Today’s protest material, that is, those lyrics which contain some statement of dissatisfaction, is usually directed at society as a whole. With the punk rock performers like the Ramones, the Talking Heads or the Sex Pistols, the very presence of the performer is its own form of protest. In effect, the performer comes to embody the very things he hates. Frequently, the oppression and violence the songwriter finds around him are met only with his resignation, as indicated in Fred Turner’s *Gimme Your Money Please*, recorded by the Bachman-Turner Overdrive:

Being born and raised in New York  
There ain't nothin' you won't see  
'Cause the streets are filled  
    with bad goings-on  
And you know that's no place to be.  
But my car broke down in the evenin'  
    You knew it just stopped stone cold,  
        stopped stone cold in the street  
    And a dirty mean man with a shotgun  
        in his hand  
Said, "Gimme your money, please."

He said, “Gimme your money, please.”

Wasn’t that strange?  
Wasn’t that strange indeed?<sup>62</sup>

Even when a songwriter does address himself to changing that which he dislikes, his solutions are often

vague. Poet-songwriter Roderick Falconer describes his album, *New Nation*, as a "summoning of musical force, an assault designed to overcome the decadence of contemporary music, and replace it with a new order". Yet nowhere does Falconer (Rod Taylor) explain how he intends to implement this "new order".<sup>63</sup>

### *Sexism*

Because most rock bands are all-male ensembles and because both the record and radio industries are male-dominated, rock has been a male-oriented music. From Chuck Berry in the late 1950s singing about "sweet little sixteen" with her "tight dresses and lipstick" to the Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger claiming his woman "is under my thumb", women have been seen as desirable objects in an all-male world. This trend has abated somewhat in the 1970s, with the appearance of more women songwriters (from Joni Mitchell to Sylvia Tyson) and with some increased understanding between the sexes. Yet among heavy-metal bands – bands which appeal mainly to young, white males – sexism is still very much in evidence. Steven Tyler's and Joe Perry's lyric *Walk This Way* for the heavy-metal band, Aerosmith, provides an example:

Back stroke lover always hiding 'neath the covers  
Till I talked to my daddy he'd say  
He said, "You ain't seen nothin'  
Till you go down on a muffin  
Then you're sure to be a-changing your way."  
I met a cheerleader was a real young bleeder  
Oh the times I could reminisce  
Cuz the best things of lovin'  
With her sister and her cousin  
Only started with a little kiss  
Like this.<sup>64</sup>

The sheer volume of sound used by bands like Aerosmith, too, seems to appeal to males more than females. As one young female fan recently noted, "I'd just be too scared to go to one of those gigs. It's like being in a boys' gym at school. I always have the feeling anything could happen to me."<sup>65</sup>

### *Popular Music As a Reflection of Social Violence*

Frequently the image created by the makers of pop music today is deliberately designed to portray the world as a violent, chaotic place, and the world of pop music in particular as being one filled with violence. Recent stage acts mounted by the San Francisco-based band, The Tubes, and New York-based singer Lou Reed have used various forms of media, from television sets to overhead projections, to portray states of violence or apathy.

In two recent "rock movies", the inner workings of the rock world have been shown in a negative way. In *The Phantom of the Paradise*, a would-be songwriter has to sell his soul to the devil in order to achieve his

desires; in the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* there is a bisexual singing Dr. Frankenstein character. Both films are treated in an almost comic-book manner, with both characterization and action so stylized that an aura of unreality is constant throughout.

This sense of unreality pervades many of the live performances given by current rock bands. The members of Kiss, for instance, appear to be comic-book characters. Yet this unreality is given the stamp of reality through the music itself.

### *Conclusions*

Rock has always been and will likely remain an aggressive kind of music, one that may be violent at times. It can be argued that it should be this way, that it should indeed be a music that keeps its audience awake to the world around it. There is less to be feared from this kind of music than there is from the kind that drugs its listeners by constantly repeating such fraudulently civilizing notions as the need for the "good life", or the ability to find perfect happiness from idealized romance. The problems that do exist come not so much from the musicians or the music itself, but from those who package and sell this music, and who do not care what the effect of this packaging may be.

Rock, or at least elements of it, is now the mainstream music in North American life, where it was once only an alternative to the mainstream music. To some degree, then, it has become as much an establishment music as that which it replaced in the 1950s. Yet to another degree it still manages to embrace widely divergent tastes and reflect vastly different social groups. Rock is, in fact, many musics, all of which are contemporary with still other forms, such as rhythm'n'blues, reggae, folk, jazz, blues and country, to name but a few. There is a great hunger for this music, and it is this very need that is all too often taken advantage of. Promoters know that people will come to concerts no matter how badly organized they are; record companies know people will buy their product as long as it is packaged in an appealing way.

Two phenomena have emerged from this process. On the one hand, much of rock has become softer, more homogenized and, in a sense, "safer" in order to appeal to as large an audience as possible – the new mainstream. On the other hand, there is another portion of the rock audience, usually a younger audience, that wants rock to be as vital and as electrifying as it once was, and that rejects the mainstream kind of rock. This is the most volatile portion of the rock audience and it is to this portion that groups like Kiss aim their appeal. As explained earlier, Kiss and the more macabre routines of Alice Cooper have a comic-book quality – a two-dimensional style which is not taken all that seriously by its audience. Yet the images of death or fascism reveal a certain discontent on the part of the audience, and, at the same time, fuel this discontent. What is even more disturbing, however, is that the people behind these

images, those who create and market them, are trading on this discontent and are not concerned with its roots or its consequences. Rock has become such big business that the people who create it are more and more removed from those who consume it. The people on the stage and the people in the audience are strangers to one another. This has only increased the ability of the former to manipulate the latter. It is this process of manipulation that represents the true violence in popular music today.

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## Discography

### **Aerosmith, *Rocks* (Columbia PC-34165).**

This band is one of the more popular “heavy-metal” groups now touring (the term “heavy-metal” generally refers to a very loud, simplistic brand of rock which, to many of its listeners, represents a return to the music’s basic style). Aerosmith appeals to a young, white, mostly male audience who appreciate the sheer toughness of the sound. The lyrics of Aerosmith’s material usually deal with frustration in one form or another.

### **Alice Cooper, *Welcome To My Nightmare* (Atlantic 18130).**

This album is, in a sense, the soundtrack of a recent touring show. In the act Cooper, the protagonist, is beset by living representations of nightmarish images – spiders, monsters, et cetera. To some extent, this is comic-strip horror (Cooper at one point in the show dances with some skeletons), yet Cooper spent no little time and money trying to make these effects seem as gruesome as possible.

### **Black Sabbath, *Sabotage* (Warner Brothers 2822).**

### **Black Sabbath, *Technical Ecstasy* (Warner Brothers 2969).**

### **Black Sabbath, *We Sold Our Soul* (Warner Brothers 2923).**

The attempt on these three albums is to convince listeners that the band is part of some evil cult. Each concert is devised as some sort of arcane ritual.

### **Blue Oyster Cult, *On Your Feet* (Columbia KG-33371).**

Another “black” cult band. The group began its career parodying this very image, yet when younger fans started taking it all seriously, so did the band. Their record jackets have featured cultish symbols with stylized crosses and dark colours.

### **David Bowie, *Changesonebowie* (RCA APLI-1723).**

Bowie considers his lyrics as the most important aspect of his music: they are given high relief in most songs. The themes he usually deals with include the “deadness” of the modern world and the resulting futility. Bowie presents an androgynous image on stage and has frequently talked about his bisexuality.

### **Fanny, *Fanny* (Reprise S-6416).**

One of the first rock albums by an all-female band, it is also one of the few to offer a genuinely feminine perspective in an otherwise male-dominated and male-oriented medium.

### **Roderick Falconer (Rod Taylor), *New Nation* (United Artists LA651-G).**

Falconer prefers a very hard image, one that deliberately recalls those of World War II totalitarians. His songs, particularly the title song from this album, attack things he sees as “decadent”, including long-haired youth, and the power of the media.

### **Kiss, *Alive* (Casablanca 7020).**

### **Kiss, *Destroyer* (Casablanca 7016).**

The liner notes used for the *Alive* album include bass player Gene Simmons’ words to his fans. “Dear victim,” Simons writes, “I love to do all those deliciously painful things to you that make you writhe and groan in ecstasy. My spiked seven-

inch boot heels are at the ready should you be in the mood for heavy sport.” Kiss’s music serves to orchestrate this theme, although there are also some more generalized lyrics about growing up and about love. But the lyrics and the rest of the music – simple chords played at a very high volume – are merely there to set the mood for the band’s stage act, which includes the vomiting of fake blood and fire-breathing.

### **Kraftwerk, *Radio-Activity* (Capitol ST-1145).**

An album of metallic noises seeking to emphasize the supposedly deadening conditions of life today.

### **Bob Marley And The Wailers, *Natty Dread* (Island 9281).**

Although Marley is a Rastafarian and therefore devoted to a peaceful way of life, his songs deal with the harsh poverty in Jamaica, an oppressive society and the occasional need for violence against that society.

### **The Ramones, *Ramones* (Sire 7520).**

Part of the New York City-based “punk-rock” movement, the Ramones play a kind of simplistic, repetitive music which, according to one description, “underscores the calculated banality of their image with ripples of violence and squalls of frustration”. An off-shoot of this so-called “blank generation” of bands is a kind of rock called “puke rock” in which the members of the band vomit on stage as part of their act.

### **Lou Reed, *Metal Machine Music* (RCA LPL-11-1).**

Reed is another New York-based “punk rocker”, but one who takes a more literate approach to his music. The themes of his music are concerned with the anarchy and wildness found in the streets of today’s big cities. His music, therefore, is deliberately chaotic.

### **Rush, *Caress of Steel* (Mercury SRM-1-1046).**

### **Rush, *2112* (Mercury SRM-1-1079).**

Rush is another “heavy-metal” band that appeals chiefly to young, white males. Their lyrics, when they deal with women, are sexist in tone. Their music itself is appreciated for its sheer strength. Rush’s music is an exercise in aural brutality.

### **Rod Stewart, *Night On The Town* (Warner Brothers 2938).**

Stewart’s songs are frequently concerned with love and sex, yet they always emphasize the male’s supremacy over the female, especially in the hit, *Tonight’s The Night*, from this album.

### **The Rolling Stones, *Let It Bleed* (London NPS-4).**

This album is the Stones’ answer, in the title at least, to the Beatles’ passive *Let It Be* album. The lyrics are full of warning of “bad times coming down”.

### **Donna Summer, *Love To Love You* (Oasis).**

Full of orgiastic panting and puffing, this disco-album has been described as “pop porn”.

### **Thin Lizzy, *Fighting* (Mercury SRMI-1108).**

This music is a call to strength: assertive, ultra-masculine images dominate throughout.

**The Tubes**, *Young and Rich* (A&M Records 4580).

This San Francisco-based band, using a variety of media on stage, celebrate the crudeness and chaos of civilization.

**Wild Cherry**, *Wild Cherry* (Epic PE-34195).

This is a rather straightforward disco album: that is, it is well-orchestrated dance music. Yet, in several of the songs the words take on a racist tone, as in "play that funky music, white boy, or . . .".

*The Phantom Of the Paradise* (Soundtrack) (A&M 3653).

A parody of *The Phantom of The Opera*, this work portrays the music industry as a brutal, hellish world in which one must sell one's soul in order to succeed.

*The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Soundtrack) (Ode 77026).

Bisexuality and homosexuality are emphasized by the lyrics.

